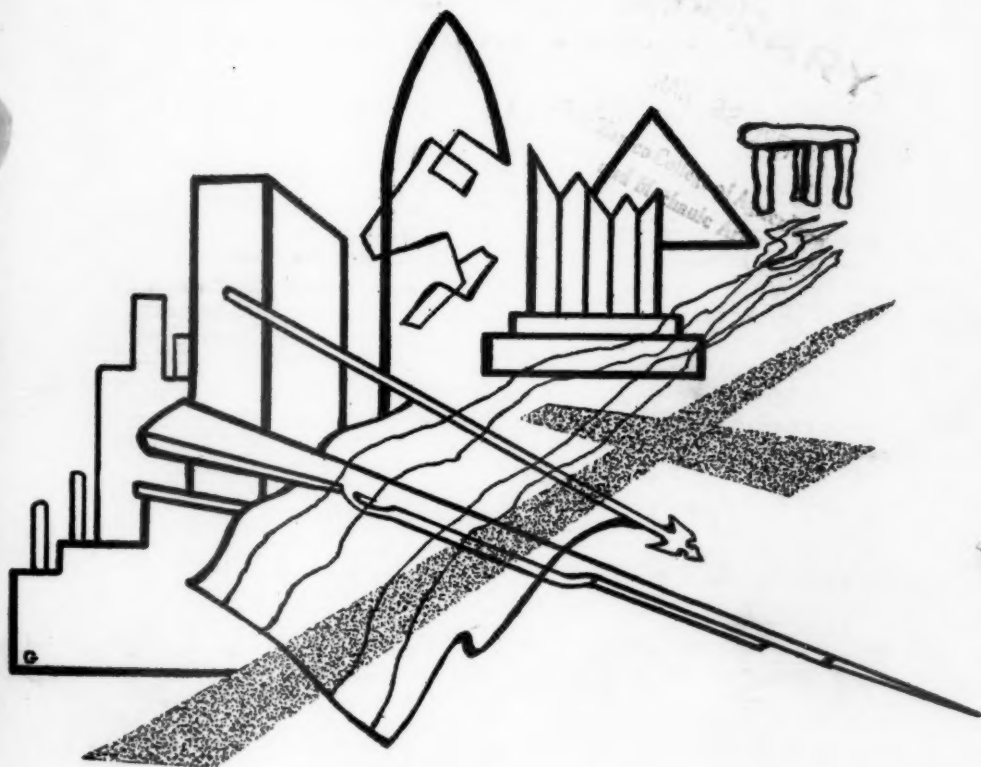


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# the christian SCHOLAR



HISTORY, HISTORIANS AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES

Thomas P. Gowan / E. Harris Harbison / Arthur  
M. Schlesinger, Jr. / Leonard L. Trinterud / J. Mel-  
vin Peet / George V. Taylor / James D. Bryden

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## THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

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Commission on Christian Higher Education

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The purpose of the Commission on Christian Higher Education is to develop basic philosophy and requisite programs within its assigned field; to awaken the entire public to the conviction that religion is essential to a complete education and that education is necessary in the achievement of progress; to foster a vital Christian life in college and university communities of the United States of America; to strengthen the Christian college, to promote religious instruction therein, and to emphasize the permanent necessity of higher education under distinctly Christian auspices.

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## The Editor's Preface



DEVOTING AN ISSUE OF *The Christian Scholar* to "History, Historians, and the Christian Perspective" may seem somewhat presumptuous and even unnecessary. The field of history has been treated generously by those scholars who are concerned that the Christian faith should be seen in its relevance to the academic disciplines. And, of all the fields of scholarship perhaps none has reflected a kinship to theology with greater consistency than history. Many have, therefore, found credible the suggestion that the historian needs a standpoint of faith to be competent in his field and that "written history is an act of faith." Equally so, the theologian has often acknowledged that he cannot serve well in his academic area unless he has close associations with sound historical scholarship because in most respects his actual "subject" is the very stuff of history. Christianity, as an historical religion, finds that God's self-disclosure is in events, in time, in judgment, and in redemption. Assuming this kind of inescapable interrelationship of the realm of faith and the discipline of history, we can devote this issue of the *Scholar* to a familiar concern—the thesis that it is possible for scholars in the historical field to be *Christian historians*.

There is, nevertheless, the continuing tendency to divorce history, as a science, from the perspectives of Christian faith. The relation between history and Christianity seems to some to be a problem and not to be the solution of a problem. Historiography, as historians have often pointed out, when it is under the control of theology has often been marred by distortions of historical fact and severe limitations upon honest inquiry. And theologians at the same time have often accused the historians of misreading history, or at least of omitting relevant considerations, when they were governed by hidden presuppositions which removed the working out of God's purposes from the realm of history. Thus, the battle continues between the historian who is concerned with the pure facts of history and the theologian who wants to protect history from being wholly "detheologized."

Even the large amount of literature available in this area has not ended the battle. It has provided substantial evidence on behalf of the thesis of this issue; and, we trust that other articles presented in the pages of the *Scholar* have contributed further to the existing evidence. We are desirous now of adding further to the material which can be drawn upon by those who would seek to know the primary concerns of the Christian historian. We are not, however, tackling the big question—the question to which Professor E. Harris Harbison referred in his essay on "Religion Perspectives in College Teaching (in History)." He began a central section of the essay with this sentence: "The question which haunts any historian today who is at all sensitive to the deeper currents of the age in which he lives, the question his students constantly ask of him by implication when they do not put it into words, is the question of the meaning of history." This has deservedly occupied primary attention in many essays, lectures, monographs and major books; it has sharply focused attention upon the really decisive question, the one which divides between the historians who find history's meaning within it,

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beyond it, or wholly absent. The Christian perspective has persistently demanded that history should be taken seriously. No Christian can finally dismiss history as nonsense. But this does not mean that he can easily assert the sense it does make in its totality. Both assurance and doubt exist for the Christian; they can be only partially resolved; in substance they are held in suspension in the confession which Professor Harbison makes later in his essay. He says that while "no man can *know* the meaning of history . . . his faith that there is meaning in history may perhaps be counted to him as knowledge in the same sense that faith is counted to the Protestant believer as righteousness."

The faith that history is meaningful derives not only from the belief that God is at work in history and that His purposes are influential within the events of history. It derives also from the Christian understanding of man—his nature and destiny. Thus, in addition to the fact that the Christian historian is obliged to operate under the generally accepted canons of historical scholarship and must submit his findings to the scrutiny of the whole profession, the Christian historian can make a distinctive contribution to his discipline by relating to history and scholarship his understanding of man, of God's relationship to man and to the historical process, and the role of God's redemptive purposes in history. He finds that the central core of history is *Heilsgeschichte*, the history of redemption, where the power of Christ and the redemptive community is, as it were, concentrated but from which it permeates outward to all history. He can also acknowledge the complexity of history which cautions him against accepting any simplified determinisms and which pushes him to seek an ever more profound levels the significance of historical data.

The essays which constitute the series of major articles in this issue are presented in part because we believe them to be provocative. They are not threshing old straw! We are hopeful that they will encourage discussion, for they are controversial and might well be headed, because of their tentativeness, with the phrase, "for discussion purposes only." They represent a search for the starting points of the historian who would bring his Christian categories to bear upon his scholarship. They seek to set forth the way in which Christian faith can nourish, deepen, enrich the historian's understanding of his subject, even when it does not readily deliver to him a simple, solid, and precise formulation of history's total meaning.

More important, perhaps, is the fact that several of the major articles are attempts to see, and bear witness to, the hand of God in specific events or figures in history. Specific historical topics are addressed in the estimate of Jefferson and Hamilton and in the evaluation of the French Revolution. Thus, specific attention is given to actual subjects with which the teacher and scholar in history must deal in his work. Here the relation of Christian faith to the discipline is set forth not in general terms but around particular topics. Here the practical is related intimately to the theoretical as the latter's dynamic origin. The unifying of the practical

#### EDITOR'S PREFACE

and the theoretical along these lines is the basis of commending these articles to you. And, whether rightly or wrongly, the Christian perspective is brought into creative relation with the thesis proposed. Professor Roger L. Shinn in his essay in *Liberal Learning and Religion* quotes Hegel as having said that the one thing history teaches is "that peoples and governments never have learned anything from history." But Professor Shinn's further comment is extremely relevant. "It is more hopeful, and perhaps more truthful," he continues, "to say that what people learn from history depends upon what they bring to its understanding." We believe that, however Christians may disagree about the particulars, what they bring to history and historical scholarship deepens and enriches their understanding and, hopefully, their wisdom about the most intimate context of man's life.

## Jefferson and Hamilton: A Christian Evaluation

THOMAS P. GOVAN



THE CHRISTIAN FAITH is not a political philosophy. It contains no handbook of political principles, no guidebook for aspiring politicians, nor even a favored form of political organization. But it does have something to say about God and Man and from these statements can be derived certain principles of judgment against which it is possible to measure any political system or philosophy. The first and most important of these statements is that brought down from Sinai by Moses which says, "I am the Lord your God: You shall have no other gods before me," and the second, the doctrine of original sin which causes all of us truthfully to say, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us."

To complement these, the Church, in its wisdom, has denounced certain views as heretical, that is, false, truly false, and it is in opposition to these false claimants to the truth that most of the affirmations of the Christian faith have been made. Judged by these tests, Thomas Jefferson, during most of his adult life<sup>1</sup>, was a heretic, Alexander Hamilton, an orthodox Christian thinker; and, as a consequence, it becomes a matter of some importance to Christians to decide which of the two is the safer political guide to follow.

Jefferson was not only a heretic, he was also an idolater, and the idol he worshipped was individual freedom.

"Were it made a question," he wrote, "whether no law, as among the savage Americans, or too much law, as among the civilized Europeans, submits man to the greatest evil, one who has seen both conditions would pronounce [it] to [be] the last; and that the sheep are happier of themselves, than under the care of the wolves."

No sacrifice was too great, if, as a result, what he called freedom was increased. "I would . . . [see] half the earth desolated, rather than to see the French Revolution fail," he said in justification of the Reign of Terror, and reinforced his state-

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<sup>1</sup>This reservation is important because Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and other state papers and the responsible holder of appointive and elective office, was a different thinker from Jefferson the political theorist in the *Notes on Virginia* and in his private correspondence. The second Jefferson is the one who has been most influential on subsequent generations and it is against this aspect of his thought that the present paper is directed.

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ment by adding "were there but an Adam and Eve left in every country, and left free, it would be better than as it now is."<sup>2</sup>

The freedom he worshipped, paradoxically, was not freedom at all, but merely an illusion. Jefferson and other liberals of the enlightenment, trusting too much in the powers of right reason, made themselves and other men the slaves of uniform natural laws which they thought underlay the conflicting appearances of the world. Their gospel was science and, like the heretical gnostics of the ancient world with the Christian gospel, they thought that in it was to be found "a final and perfect knowledge of all being." The secret of good government, Jefferson once said, was to "lay down true principles and follow them inflexibly,"<sup>3</sup> and included in the principles were the laws of Malthus and Ricardo, the one dooming mankind to eternal famine, pestilence, and war as a remedy for an inevitable over-population, and the other limiting wages to the bare cost of subsistence.

He became the spokesman in America for the point of view which said that the wisest policy was to leave all economic activity unregulated, uncontrolled, and undirected because that government was best which governed least. Jefferson, in addition to being a Gnostic, was also a Pelagian and a Manichaeon. He believed that men could become virtuous through choosing between the good and evil forces which struggled for domination in the world. The good, he said, was agriculture and the rural life, the evil, manufacturing and commerce in the cities (Karl Marx himself did not so rigidly hold to the doctrine of economic determinism); and upon the choice between them depended salvation.

The American society could be free, he insisted,

"only as long as we remain virtuous; and I think we shall be so, as long as agriculture is our principal object, which will be the case, while there remain vacant lands in any part of America. When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become corrupt as in Europe and go to eating one another as they do there."

He also said

"I consider the class of artificers as the panders of vice and the instruments by which the liberties of a country are generally overthrown,"

and again that

"the mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body."<sup>4</sup>

These harsh, dogmatic judgments concerning the character of the urban populace were not contradictory to Jefferson's own interpretation of his words in the Declaration of Independence. The equality there affirmed was that of men at

<sup>2</sup>*Democracy by Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Saul K. Padover (New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939), pp. 32, 60. This book is cited because in it are conveniently collected Jefferson's central statements of his liberal, democratic, and egalitarian philosophy.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 105-06, 108.

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their birth, when, according to John Locke's sensationalist philosophy, their minds and characters were blank tablets to be written upon by experience and education. Virtue, vice, and the inequalities and differences which subsequently appeared, were thus the products of individual life and training. Jefferson could, for this reason, consistently write,

"Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, . . . whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue," and conclude that "generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption."<sup>5</sup>

Alexander Hamilton agreed with Jefferson's denunciation of the morals of the urban groups. "Your people, sir," he has been quoted as saying, "are a great beast." He likewise believed in the fundamental equality of men, though the reason for his belief was different from that of Jefferson. To him, as to more formal Christian thinkers, all men were equal because each was a sinner and had no health in him. As early as 1775, he quoted with approval David Hume's maxim that

"in contriving any system of government, and fixing the several checks and controls of the constitution, every man ought to be supposed a knave, and to have no other end, in all his actions, but private interest."<sup>6</sup>

He stated in one speech in the constitutional convention that

"Most individuals and all public bodies" are governed by the "passions of avarice, ambition, interest;"

and in another,

"Take mankind as they are and what are they governed by? Their passions. . . . One great error is that we suppose mankind more honest than they are. Our prevailing passions are ambition and interest; and it will ever be the duty of a wise government to avail itself of the passions, in order to make them subservient to the public good; for these ever induce us to action."<sup>7</sup>

Hamilton could not, therefore, agree with Jefferson's exemption of the cultivators of the soil from the corruption which was common to all men, and while he knew as well as did Jefferson that the wolves were not the proper guardians of the sheep, he was unwilling to accept a definition of men which divided them so categorically into two such unlike groups. He believed that any man who was not restrained by law and tradition was more likely to become a wolf than a sheep, because, in his view, the greatest danger to liberty was the absolute authority of any individual or group.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>6</sup>David Hume, "Of the Independency of Parliament." *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, 4 vols. (Boston 1854), III, 39, quoted in Henry C. Lodge (ed.), *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, 12 vols. (New York, G. P. Putman's Sons, 1904) I, 73.

<sup>7</sup>Lodge, *Works*, I, 384, 408.



## JEFFERSON AND HAMILTON

"Give all power to the many," he said. "they will oppress the few. Give all power to the few, they will oppress the many. Both therefore ought to have power that each may defend itself against the other."<sup>8</sup>

He, like Edmund Burke, advocated the principle of the British Constitution because through it alone, he believed, could public strength be united with individual security and freedom. Power in this government was unlimited, but it was divided between a monarch and two legislative bodies (one the changing representatives of the people, the other the permanent representatives of the aristocracy) because none of the three was virtuous and all had to be distrusted. He, again like Burke, predicted that the French Revolution would end in tyranny as soon as he learned that it was based upon the axiomatic statement that ignorance and neglect of the rights of men are the sole causes of oppression and corruption in government.

The test of history confirmed these predictions. Freedom, which means the power to make errors and to adopt wrong policies (to commit sins) cannot endure under a government based on inflexible, dogmatic principles whether established by right reason or revelation. Such maxims as Jefferson's "only lay down true principles, and adhere to them inflexibly" lead to tyranny when acted upon, regardless of whether it is the Church, the king ruling by divine right, a Marx, Lenin, Stalin or Hitler who formulates them.

Hamilton's political position, consequently, was not the opposite of Jefferson's, but rather was the center between two extremes. Freedom was endangered, he believed, by an absolute state or church and also by unrestrained individualism. He did not stand for authority against freedom or for freedom against authority. Instead he looked upon freedom as an essential necessity for genuine authority, and upon authority as a necessary protection for freedom. His opponents were those who wanted to absolutize either, for the great enemy to Hamilton was the universal tendency of idolatrous men to transform the "relative into the absolute" and "the all too human into the Divine."<sup>9</sup> In his view neither revelation nor reason provided an infallible guide, and the worship of the true God had one of its greatest values in preventing the worship of the false.

The political philosophies of Jefferson and Hamilton first came into conflict in George Washington's cabinet at the beginning of our national history. The nation at this time was weak, virtually bankrupt, and dependent upon Europe and European possessions for its tools and equipment and as a market for its agricultural produce. It owned vast areas of unsettled lands west of the Appalachians, but these were occupied by semi-hostile Indian tribes, and American control was challenged by the British from Canada and the Spanish from Louisiana and the Floridas.

<sup>8</sup>Charles C. Fansill (ed.). *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union of the American States* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1927), pp. 220-21.

<sup>9</sup>The phraseology is taken from Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun* (New York, Harper & Bros., 1952), p. 123.



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Hamilton believed that the government should be given the strength to meet these problems or else domestic adventures and foreign foes would take advantage of its weakness to destroy it and its people's freedom. His purpose was to supply this strength which, in a capitalistic economy, required not only military and naval forces but also an abundant supply of liquid capital, a trustworthy medium of exchange, an effective mercantile and transportation system, and an industrial establishment. Such a system, he believed, would increase national power and wealth and, at the same time, contribute to the prosperity of every individual. The poor would be provided with employment, and with their wages they would purchase and wear, eat, smoke, or chew the wool, cotton, meat, vegetables, and tobacco produced by American agriculture. The farmers and planters would thus be compensated for whatever increase in taxes or wages was caused by this system; and the merchants, bankers, brokers, and shipowners would profit from the general increase in trade. Through these measures, Hamilton thought, the "ambition and avarice" of each person in the country would be enlisted in support of the government. The whole nation would be tied together through "ligaments of interest," and the dangerous passions would be made "subservient to the public good."

Jefferson, on the other hand, believed that the proper course for the United States was to leave individuals free to follow their own inclinations and interests as they were guided and controlled by natural law. Governmental power was the great danger to be guarded against, and anarchy, if that should result, was preferable to a state which imposed any but the most necessary restraints upon personal freedom.

He and those who shared his point of view were not strong enough to defeat Hamilton's financial program because the "avarice" of the wealthy and powerful groups in a majority of the states were enlisted in support of the funding of the national debt, the assumption of the state debts, and the charter of the Bank of the United States; but they had more success with the rest of the Hamiltonian measures. The proposal of a regulatory protective tariff and subsidies for industry and agriculture, and for the sale of public lands at a price sufficiently high to pay for internal improvements and civilizing institutions in the newly opened areas, lacked the support of powerful and established interests and also promised to limit speculative opportunities. They were defeated and the subsequent industry and commerce, most internal improvements, and the settlement of the western lands were individually initiated with little governmental regulation, direction, or control.

The Jefferson triumph was completed in 1801 by his election as President of the United States, but almost at once the responsibilities of power exercised a moderating influence upon his political theories. He became almost as Hamiltonian as Hamilton himself, but many of his associates refused to follow him. They continued to believe that a society to be free, must have a weak government, and in 1811, after Jefferson's retirement, they prevented the recharter of the national bank. The

## JEFFERSON AND HAMILTON

disastrous consequences of this victory of liberalism and *laissez faire* were made apparent by American military and economic weakness during the War of 1812, and Jefferson's successors, James Madison, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams turned back to the policies initiated by Hamilton.

This second Hamiltonian era was ended in the 1830's under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, and John C. Calhoun, who, divided as they were about such matters as the presidential succession, nullification, and patronage, were united in opposition to the principle that the government should guide, regulate and protect the economy. The principles first advocated by Jefferson, that economic enterprise was governed by laws with which men should not interfere and that that government was best which governed least, were never effectively challenged again until the close of the nineteenth century, and the resulting anarchy in the realms of finance, industry, commerce, and agriculture had the effect that Hamilton had anticipated.

Powerful men, unrestrained by tradition and law, turned out to be wolves and not sheep. Individual freedom was destroyed in numerous areas by tyrannical and exploitive individuals and corporations; and slaveholders, who justified the institution on the grounds that it was an immoral act of government to interfere with their individual freedom to enslave others, were unwilling to conform to the moral judgment of the whole western world until forced to do so by a Civil War. Violence became the accustomed mode of settling disputes over land, water, and poker in the Far West, white supremacy in the South and other areas, the right of labor to organize, and the conflicting ambitions of rival corporations. While in the economic sphere, only the speculators and those so rich they could not be hurt, profited as the economy moved through an unrestrained cycle of "boom and bust" to the financial ruin of most of those who engaged in productive activities, farmers, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, shippers, and those who invested their earnings, savings, and borrowed funds in these enterprises.

The correction of these evils has been provided by a long and painful return, not yet completed, to the orthodox principles of Hamilton, during which a battle has had to be fought not only with the defenders of the Jeffersonian heresies but also with the advocates of a new heresy of collectivism. Karl Marx, a German philosopher and economist, was the principal author of this new science of society, which, like that of Jefferson, would give to virtuous men a perfected social, political, and economic system. All that had to be done was to eliminate private property and profits, and corruption and misfortune would be abolished from life. Its proponents, again like Jefferson, were willing to pay any cost for this noble result, and in the Soviet Union and Communist China, where the Marxian experiment has been tried, they almost have seen "half the earth desolated," and among certain groups not even an Adam and Eve has been left alive.

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These results have not been accidental. They are part and parcel of any heretical belief that man, through his own efforts, can perfect himself or build on this earth a perfected society. All he can do is to be aware of his own limitations, to recognize the truth of Hamilton's statement that "most individuals and all public bodies" including the state, the church, and every other institution, are governed by the "passions of avarice, ambition, interest," and to attempt to make these passions "subservient to the public good." We must not worship idols, we must worship the true God alone, for God will not find him guiltless who would sacrifice all in the name of individual freedom or the perfect state. Human freedom, as Hamilton pointed out many years ago, is never to be "found in despotism or the extremes of democracy, but in moderate governments,"<sup>10</sup> and can only be preserved by subjecting every man to public authority and protecting him from its abuse. This great aim cannot be achieved by "true principles" adhered to "inflexibly," but only by a reliance upon a changing and adaptable tradition and by flexible law.

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<sup>10</sup>Lodge, *Works*, I, 411.

## Comments on Dr. Govan's Article

### I

By E. HARRIS HARBISON



HIS IS SURELY A VIGOROUS and arresting reappraisal of two of the founding fathers. Mr. Govan has a way of provoking a reader into both agreement and contradiction at the same time with the same turn of phrase. The central thesis—that a public policy based on an optimistic view of human nature and a naive confidence in natural law is not reconcilable with Christian belief—is sound. But the article makes me wonder whether a heresy trial is the best way of demonstrating this truth. Can a single historical figure like Jefferson ever incarnate the consequences of “heresy” so perfectly as the author implies?

Like all inquisitors, Mr. Govan has a pretty firm idea of what orthodox Christianity is and what heresy is. Thomas Jefferson is convicted of idolatry, Gnosticism, Pelagianism, and Manichaeism out of his own mouth, which is the way any good heretic should be convicted. As is proper, there is no chance for the prisoner to explain the setting of his quoted remarks, to stack his conduct up against his words, or to challenge the standard of orthodoxy maintained by the court. And as sometimes happens in such procedures, the judge surreptitiously changes the meaning of “heresy” halfway through the trial—at first it concerns religion, but later it concerns economics—so that the inevitable connection between religious heresy and social subversion is subtly suggested to the court and onlookers. Meanwhile, Hamilton, the worldly-wise onlooker and *amicus curiae*, comes off very well—perhaps so well as to amaze and amuse Hamilton himself.

The trouble with all this is that it is too neat. It ignores or brushes aside all the complexities and tragic dilemmas that are the stuff of history. Jefferson's faith in natural law had a long history back of it. It was not so inevitably opposed to Christian belief as our modern inquisitor implies, nor was it responsible for all the modern ills which he lists. As for the doctrine of Original Sin as the standard of orthodoxy, it must always be kept in balance with the doctrine of Creation. The incarnationalists and humanists are certainly out of favor in mid-twentieth century Christianity, but they have done much to moderate the fury of the theologians in Christian history. If we are to label Erasmus and Jefferson heretics, are we thereby obligated to canonize Machiavelli and Hamilton? Mr. Govan argues that Jefferson was an extremist, Hamilton a middle-of-the-roader; but in the setting of their own day, it often seems that Jefferson in action had a better title to emotional balance and sanity of judgment than his rival.

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This relation of Christian heresy to social doctrine is a lot more difficult than Mr. Govan makes it look. The heretics—e. g. the Anabaptists—have often given us fresh Christian insights into politics. Not all orthodox Christians have been so perspicacious politically as Hamilton. Feudalism, absolute monarchy, liberalism, and conservatism have all been proved to be the logical political expression of orthodox Christianity at one time or another. Jefferson's revolutionary idealism is probably fundamentally non-Christian, it is true. But before it is judged by any standard, it must be placed in its own historical setting: the Old Regime in France, "government by corruption" in England, and ramshackle feudalism elsewhere in Europe. What we need, as Herbert Butterfield is showing us, is not more Procrustean exercises which measure historical figures and systems by some creedal orthodoxy and lop off the protruding "heretical" features, but a deepened Christian understanding of the tragedy and complexity inherent in political decisions and political dilemmas. I like Mr. Govan's verve and zeal, but it seems to me that he pushes us rather than leads us in this direction.

## II

BY LEONARD J. TRINTERUD

This is a rather perplexing article. We are asked to follow Alexander Hamilton in political and economic matters because he was an orthodox Christian. We are asked to reject the views of Thomas Jefferson on political and economic matters because he was a heretic, Gnostic, Pelagian, Manichaeian and idolater. Supposedly, then, the political and economic ideas of Hamilton are not only derived from his orthodox Christianity, but are also the only political and economic orientation which can be derived from orthodox Christianity. Likewise, Jefferson's ideas are born of heresy and idolatry, etc., and can never be held except by Gnostics, Pelagians, Manichaeans, heretics and idolaters. Apart from the fact that such a line of argument is a *non sequitur* in theology as well as in logic, there are serious historical objections to it. For one thing, we ought really not to hope for any great increase among us of Hamilton's variety of orthodox Christianity. Secondly, Jefferson's political and economic philosophy was not his own exclusive production. It was older than himself and was then currently being held by intelligent men of many varieties of religious outlook and faith—some even more "orthodox" than Hamilton. The question as to whether the experience of a century and a half in American life has vindicated the political and economic views of Hamilton rather than those of Jefferson can hardly be discussed in this fashion. Neither can we gain much light on Christian political and economic responsibility and duty in our time from this sort of discussion. (I happen not to be a Jeffersonian.)

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The terms Gnostic, Pelagian and Manichaeian have rather precise meanings. Whether they are better or worse than Deism is not our present concern. But to call Jefferson's religious outlook anything else than Deism is sheer wind. And, lest one get too righteous about the tag "Deist," he ought to remember Claude C. Bowers' cutting remark on Jefferson's religion, to the effect that there had been a good bit of it in very respectable American pulpits in the 20th century.

Jefferson, according to this paper, must have been several men. On page two he is rated for advocating that "all economic activity" be left "unregulated, uncontrolled, undirected because that government was best which governed least." On that same page, and on page five, it is said that Jefferson held the notion that all of human life is governed by natural law which ought by political philosophers to be interpreted in terms of true principles which should be followed inflexibly. This followed is then interpreted so as to make Jefferson advocate the kind of "thorough" following the French Reign of Terror of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, and of Hitler, and other tyrannies. Yet, on pages six, seven, and eight, Jefferson's own acts while in political authority are portrayed as having do-nothing *laissez-faire*. Again, Jefferson's views are found similar to those of the Soviet Union and Communist China, views which have led, we are told, to boundless misery and devastation. "These results have not been accidental."

Following inflexibly true principles of politics founded on reason and natural law meant for thinkers like Jefferson something very different from the Reign of Terror, Stalin, Hitler, *et al.* It meant that there were some things which were outside the domain and power of men, and therefore reason should guide men to follow inflexibly political principles which dictated leaving these matters strictly alone, i.e. *laissez-faire*. Whether such ideas are right or wrong may properly be debated. But, to equate them with modern totalitarianism makes odd reading.

"Of all those [provisions] which have been thought of for securing fidelity in the administration of the government, constant ralliance to the principles of the constitution, and progressive amendments with the progressive advances of the human mind, or changes in human affairs, it is the most effectual. Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day. Altho' I do not, with some enthusiasts, believe that the human condition will ever advance to such a state of perfection as that there shall no longer be pain or vice in the world, yet I believe it susceptible of much improvement, and, most of all in matters of government and religion; and that the diffusion of knowledge among the people is to be the instrument by which it is to be effected."

Adrienne Koch, from whose *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1953), the above letter is quoted, says further to this point on Jefferson's ideas,



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"Therefore, although not all men are rogues, the rogues are usually in power; so that faith in human nature by no means argues any abrogation of eternal vigilance, nor is it a universalist faith in the goodness of each and every man either now or in the future" (p. 119).

The comparison of Hamilton and Jefferson (page four) which makes Hamilton the defender of giving absolute power to no single group, seems to imply that Jefferson held some opposing view—a view stated evidently in Burke's criticism of the French Revolution. The literature of the conflict between Hamilton and Jefferson puts the controversy between them quite differently. Hamilton championed the primacy of the executive and Jefferson the primacy of the legislative. So also (page seven) Jefferson supposedly was so opposed to government that he would almost destroy the possibility of government. His own words belie such a notion.

"We consider society as one of the natural wants with which man has been created; that he has been endowed with faculties and qualities to effect its satisfaction by concurrence of others having the same want; that when by the exercise of these faculties he has procured a state of society, it is one of his acquisitions which he has a right to regulate and control, jointly indeed with all those who have concurred in the procurement, whom he cannot exclude from its use or direction more than they have him. We think experience has proved it safe, for the mass of individuals composing the society, to reserve to themselves personally the exercise of all rightful powers to which they are competent, and to delegate those to which they are not competent to deputies named, and removable for unfaithful conduct, by themselves immediately" (from Koch, p. 153).

Dr. Govan is quite correct in attributing (page seven) to "the avarice of the wealthy" such Hamiltonian measures as "the funding of the national debt," "the assumption of the state debts, and the charter of the Bank of the United States." But, what follows is not an acceptable handling of the Hamilton *vs.* Jefferson policies on "internal improvements." Hamilton once said that in his judgment the government of Japan was the most nearly ideal.

The Christian element in Hamilton's views as set forth on pages four to seven is somewhat elusive. Surely, Jefferson's idealization of rural life and people is scarcely a statement about the Christian doctrine of sin. Neither are the quotes from Hume and Hamilton applicable directly to the Christian doctrine of sin. Hamilton's founding of the political order on the conflict of interests between the "ambition and avarice of each person in the country" must have slender Christian underpinning. Moreover, Hamilton's idea that the government should be strong enough to control and utilize this conflict of *everyman's* avarice and ambition took precious little account of the avarice and ambition of those who held government office. Jefferson was so troubled about this that he advocated giving very limited opportunity to men to use the power of civil government over others. Russell Kirk, in *The Conservative Mind*, page 66, finds Hamilton's views both indefensible and unacceptable. "It seems hardly to have occurred to Hamilton's mind that a consolidated nation might also be a levelling nation, though he had the example of Jacobin France right before him; and he does not appear to have reflected upon the possibility that force



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in government may be applied to other purposes than the maintenance of a conservation order."

Clinton Rossiter, like Kirk no Jeffersonian, has recently taken occasion to deny Hamilton a place among the "true Conservatives."

"His basic ideas, which he voiced on the floor of the Convention [in a five-hour speech], were irrelevant in the American environment, and were certainly not those of an American conservative. Unbalanced, unchecked, centralized authority was not the sort of government for which men like Washington had fought.

"His [Hamilton's] working ideas, which he followed in his later career, were hardly more conservative. His reports and speeches as Secretary of the Treasury . . . can only be regarded as Rightism run riot" (*Conservation in America*, p. 112 f.).

In wholesale fashion, Dr. Govan blames almost every social, political and economic iniquity of the 19th century (exploitation of lands, resources, and labor; slavery and racial bigotry; boom and bust; and even the six-shooters of the Far West) to the unrestrained individual freedom advocated by Jefferson and furthered by Jackson, Van Buren, and Calhoun. One needs only to ask—when in American history did a social reformer arise from the Hamiltonian ranks? Or, is all evil in American life due to Jefferson and the Jeffersonians who ought therefore to clean up their own messes?

The conclusion of Dr. Govan's paper falls down rather badly. We are to worship God, not idols. God will punish us if we sacrifice all in the name of individual freedom, or the perfect state. (Jefferson should then go free.) Hamilton, whom we are to follow if we are not to be punished by God, exhorts us to base policy in "the state, the church (?), and every other institution" on "the passions of avarice, ambition, and interest," and then try to produce a "moderate government" by attempting to make these passions subservient to the public good. If this be the worship of God rather than the worship of idols, then Deism was not such a bad religion.

As for "flexibility," Rossiter has written that Hamilton's Federalist Party

" . . . was a high-principled party of the Right that simply could not come to terms with the liberalism inherent in the American environment. It was too proudly and inflexibly conservative to outlast even the first explosive assaults of capitalistic democracy" (*op. cit.*, p. 171).

Since Rossiter is hardly a Jeffersonian, there must be something wrong with Dr. Govan's conclusion that Hamilton's great legacy to us is "reliance upon a changing and adaptable tradition and flexible law." Such a "changing and adaptable tradition and flexible law" can, however, be found in the ideas of one early American thinker. He advocated that no generation had the right to bind the next generation. No laws ought to run for more than nineteen years (i.e. one generation then). Fundamental law also should be re-examined each nineteen years. This man was Thomas Jefferson.

III

BY ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR.

Professor Govan's interesting essay raises two main questions—one historical, the other logical.

The historical question is whether Hamilton was, in fact, an "orthodox Christian thinker" and Jefferson an "idolater"; and whether each had the clear and unambiguous views of the nature of man which Mr. Govan attributes to them.

The logical question is whether "as a consequence, it becomes a matter of some importance to Christians to decide which of the two is the safer political guide to follow"—whether, in short, orthodox theological beliefs somehow guarantee political and social wisdom.

i

Mr. Govan's portrait of Hamilton as "an orthodox Christian thinker" is surely overdrawn. His evidence is a series of quotations, none of which shows the slightest concern for Christianity or religion. These wise and skeptical remarks about human nature are much more reminiscent of such secular thinkers as Machiavelli, Hobbes and Hume than they are of, say, Jonathan Edwards or any other 18th century theologian. Far from being preoccupied with religion, as Mr. Govan's essay might suggest, Hamilton was not affiliated with a church till the end of his life. He read the Bible far less than Jefferson and displayed far less interest in theology. He had the characteristic 18th century view that religion was a good thing as a means of restraining human passions and preserving social equilibrium; but this urbane and detached creed was surely quite different from *religion*—from an overwhelming sense that the ordained system of sin and repentance was the most important thing on earth.

Moreover, Hamilton was far from consistent in applying his skepticism about human nature. If those who labored in the soil were Jefferson's "chosen people," then Hamilton had his chosen people too—the "rich and well-born." The ordinary people, he said in the Constitutional Convention, "seldom judge or determine right"; therefore give the rich "a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and, as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government." The position of equal skepticism toward higher and lower orders with which Mr. Govan identifies Hamilton was far more characteristic of John Adams.

Mr. Govan probably overstates the difference between Hamilton and Jefferson on economic policy. I note that Mr. Louis Hacker in his new book *Alexander Hamilton In The American Tradition* argues that Hamilton followed Adam Smith

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"plainly and completely" and was a "a libertarian, then, and not a mercantilist." While I believe that Mr. Hacker presses this point too far, the fact that he can make it at all suggests that Hamilton was essentially pragmatic rather than doctrinaire in his attitude toward public matters.

But the main point about Hamilton is this. Whatever his beliefs were, one can find very little in them which cannot be explained in secular terms and which were not part of available secular traditions. To give Christianity automatic and exclusive credit for all somber and penetrating insights into human nature is an act of piety but not of history.

## ii

As for Jefferson, he was certainly not an orthodox Christian. But, if he was an "idolater," his idols were far more complex—and his idolatries far more self-correcting—than Mr. Govan's account would suggest. Jefferson was a rhetorician—i.e., he tended to express his positions in general and resounding terms; but he was not at all a doctrinaire—i.e., he never felt too much bound at one moment by his resounding generalities of the moment before. This may or may not be an admirable trait; but it is one which can never be omitted in trying to make out what Jefferson really meant.

Mr. Govan quotes Jefferson in one mood. But it was also Jefferson who wrote in his First Inaugural: "Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question." Or let Hamilton answer it; for, as we have seen, Hamilton seems to have found his angels when he declared that the "rich and well-born" would "ever maintain good government." Which of these statements, by Mr. Govan's criteria, comes closer to Christian orthodoxy?

Moreover, what a man does is perhaps a more crucial test of his beliefs than what he says. Jefferson was an astute and flexible politician. He could write that those who labored in the earth were "the chosen people of God" (Mr. Govan omits Jefferson's wary qualification, "if ever he had a chosen people"); but it is not of record that he ever ran polls of the local yeomen before making up his mind on anything. Moreover, this rigorously benign view of human nature to which Mr. Govan commits him is something which Jefferson clearly must have suspended before large categories of human beings—e.g., bankers, priests, Supreme Court justices, Federalists, monarchists, and others. Jefferson, in short, was a man of singular richness, mobility and elusiveness of character—a man whose words often contradicted each other and whose behavior often contradicted his words and who plainly cannot be disposed of by a few quotations expressing a single aspect and a single mood.

Hamilton, who understood Jefferson better than Mr. Govan does, wrote of him, "Nor is it true that Jefferson is zealot enough to do any thing in pursuance of his principles which will contravene his popularity or his interest. . . . To my mind a true estimate of Mr. Jefferson's character warrants the expectation of a temporizing rather than a violent system." I fear that Mr. Govan's picture of a "harsh, dogmatic" figure hardly does historical justice to the real Jefferson.

## iii

I do not feel, therefore, that the two constructs which Mr. Govan has labelled "Hamilton" and "Jefferson" bear particular resemblance to the historical actuality. But let us suppose for a moment that Mr. Govan's historical argument is wholly correct. Does this justify him in his underlying premise—that the orthodox Christian thinker, by virtue of that fact, is "the safer political guide to follow"?

I would suggest that the theory that Christian orthodoxy offers some kind of guarantee of superior political intelligence is based on a most unrealistic view of the sources of political wisdom. Good judgment in politics is compounded of many things, of which religious faith, for better or worse, is a very minor constituent.

Such qualities as humility, charity, understanding, fortitude certainly are part of political wisdom. And they are also supposedly part of genuine Christian faith. But who would argue that an affirmation of belief is, in fact, the guarantee of any of these qualities? Who has not known many humble agnostics and self-righteous believers? Does Mr. John Foster Dulles's ostentatious religiosity make him a greater statesman than say, Unitarianism "makes" Adlai Stevenson? What about Sir Winston Churchill, whose religious beliefs are so deeply buried that as an historian he cannot even take the religious wars seriously? Would Mr. Govan advocate that we should abandon secular politics, institute a religious loyalty test, and seek "safer" political guidance in Cardinal Spellman, the Reverend Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and other representatives of Christian orthodoxy?

Obviously he really means none of these things. But it is hard to see where else his second paragraph leads. I wish that he had stuck instead by the good sense of the first two sentences of his first paragraph—in which case he would perhaps never have written the essay at all.

## Prospectus for a Christian Consideration of the French Revolution

GEORGE V. TAYLOR



AS A TRAINED HISTORIAN, trained in a "scientific" tradition which deliberately rejects and despises every thought that is "unproved," has one the right to undertake the writing of history in a manner consistent with the Christian faith?

Is it, to put the matter in other words, a betrayal of professional values or obligations to attempt a Christian interpretation of an historical event or development?

Or, again, is it in any way possible to deduce a rational, methodical, and systematic kind of historical scholarship from a belief in a Creator whose existence cannot be rationally proved but who is said to be capable of determining the outcome of events?

The essay which follows grows directly out of these questions and the serious personal concern they have aroused in the writer. Finding ourselves in the grip of a double commitment, first to a professional tradition strong in skepticism, and second to a religious belief originating in faith, we have set out to discover whether our two commitments are not hopelessly in disagreement.

This would not seem to be an entirely personal and private enquiry but an issue of general academic importance, in which two parties are directly involved. The first party consists of those who, like the writer, have come to suspect dimly that there exists a point of contact between their scholarly work and their religious faith, a point of interchange and even of interdependence deserving of reverential consideration. For such persons it becomes important to establish as clearly and explicitly and carefully as possible what changes, if any, are inflicted upon their professional attitudes and practices by the fact of their Christian belief. This is more difficult than it sounds at first hearing, and the thing is not quickly or shortly to be done. In fact, the excessive length of this paper is a reflection of the complexities involved in a reconsideration of this type and the hard labor to which one is put in the course of such a task. It is above all important for us to understand the limitations of our position, the dangers and hazards involved in the road we follow, and the possibility of committing serious and even ludicrous errors offensive not only to our colleagues but also, I think, to God.

The second party to the discussion consists of historians who hold that the "objective" or "disinterested" pursuit of historical truth forbids subjection to any faith, religious or secular. By training and through their attachment to scientific

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method they remain hostile to history written on the basis of postulates adopted in advance. The position of many of them is summarized in a pronouncement of the Committee on Historiography of the Social Science Research Council, formulated and published in 1946. Under the heading, "Important Sources of Methodological Error," the Committee declares:

Those who work in historiography in the scientific spirit cannot embrace any of the absolutes put forth by theologians or philosophers of any school as furnishing mandates by which the data of the past must be selected and organized or shaped to fit the institutional requirements of those who espouse such absolutes. Historians should seek to place absolute systems of thought in their appropriate settings of time and place.<sup>1</sup>

Those who accept the foregoing dictum as an indispensable canon of professional practice will want to know what kind of silliness Christian historians are up to, and what kind of nonsense they are apt to perpetrate. Such a question is not only legitimate but inevitable. Any profession has the right and the obligation to determine the standards of performance required of its members and even to exclude from recognized membership and practice those who fall short of these standards.

In this paper we argue mainly that what we recognize as Christian history outlaws apologetics and polemics, demands full and accurate consideration of verified evidence, and imposes obligations and responsibilities which constitute rather serious safeguards against inaccurate and dishonest practices. But we do not attempt to conceal that in the perspective offered by this Christian history a particular type of interpretation is developed affecting the selection and arrangement of the material, the explanation and commentary, and the very choice of a topic. This is to say that a Christian historiography would display a character and temperament peculiar to itself, setting it apart from other traditions, but not, we think, from the scheme of process and methodology upon which the profession presently insists.

As for the statement of the Committee on Historiography reproduced above, we accept it in everything but the last sentence. For Christian belief is not appropriate to any *particular* setting of time and place. Its relevance is eternal.

Nearly all the illustrative discussion which follows has to do with the French Revolution, our special area of research (and, to put it squarely, the only one in which we are paid to be intensively informed). It is a celebrated and controversial field of historical scholarship in which a great deal is already known and

<sup>1</sup> *Theory and Practice in Historical Study: A Report of the Committee on Historiography* (New York, Social Science Research Council, 1946), 136. This is one of twenty-one "propositions" in which the Committee summarized its methodological concepts. The membership of the Committee was eminent and influential, including Charles A. Beard and two other historians who have since been honored with the presidency of the American Historical Association.



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new discoveries are constantly being announced. What would be the outstanding features of a Christian reconsideration of this event? We hope that before we have finished we shall have indicated the major features of such a reconsideration, which, to our knowledge, has never been undertaken.

### I. AN ENIGMA OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

As I now see it the French Revolution was undertaken in the presence of a greathearted expectation, publicly avowed: that of bringing into being a free, equitable, prosperous, and progressive society, first in France and later in other lands.<sup>2</sup> It was thought at the time that the application of honest and disinterested intelligence to the conduct of public affairs would suffice to bring men out of a certain darkness into the clear light of a better world in which reason alone would assure improvement in the condition of man and benevolence in his treatment of his fellows.

It has occurred to us to ask why this expectation was refuted, and, especially during the first six years of the Revolution, why it created more problems than it settled, and why it led to the disillusionment or even the destruction of those who served it.

The summary that follows suggests the elements with which any historian will have to deal in deriving an answer to this question, and it makes clear in what sense the question grows naturally out of the history of the Revolution.

The motives of the early leaders of this revolution were secular, and within the large and diverse group who assumed leadership in 1789 several types of impulses may be perceived and identified, including the rationalist and humanitarian philosophy of the Enlightenment, indignation at the injustices of the old regime, shame at the decline of French international power and influence, and the encouraging examples of the Glorious Revolution in England and the revolt of the American colonies against the mother country. With some of these men less respectable motives undoubtedly played a part, including private interest, ambition for power and notoriety, and resentment at frustrations and injuries inflicted upon them by the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the church. Doubtless, too, our short tabulation of these motives should include at least the acknowledgement of deep psychological drives affecting consciousness and action which

<sup>2</sup>It can also be seen as a chapter in the history of democracy (an early chapter); as an episode in the history of the European balance-of-power mechanism; as the origin of the present factions and controversies in French politics; as a classic example of revolutionary behavior or as a school of revolutionary (and counterrevolutionary) technique; as a social revolution in which wealth, status, and power were redistributed between social groups; as an international system of political control, dominated by the French, in which other peoples were either incorporated bodily under French administration or brigaded into satellite states; or as an episode in the development of all European states and of such remote overseas lands as Latin America, Indonesia, and the United States.



cannot be found in the documentation. But after all, the single great justification that everyone gave for the Revolution was that it would improve the condition of man and assure his intellectual and moral elevation.

No conspiratorial party or network provoked the outbreak of the Revolution, although conservative historians have always maintained the contrary. In spite of the fact that there existed in France in 1789 many associations friendly to reform, historical research has failed to identify any organized clique aiming at a seizure of the state through incitement to violence. That is to say, there were no Bolsheviks. The simple truth is that in the three years 1787-1789 the monarchy collapsed under the weight of its problems, appealed to public support, and shortly found itself being reorganized by a parliament in which the reformers controlled the agenda.

This collapse of the old regime was itself prepared by three independent lines of development—the bankruptcy of the state (payments having been suspended in 1788), the incompetence of governmental personnel (including the King), and an economic crisis consisting of famine and unemployment which shattered the customary docility and discipline of the lower classes.

Each of these developments was in its own right indispensable to the event. The bankruptcy compelled the government to call into existence an elective parliament which had not been convoked for 175 years, and in this body the reformers dominated the proceedings. Originally summoned to give representative sanction to a new program of loans and taxes, they insisted upon reforming the state from top to bottom. Popular riots and tumults growing out of starvation and unemployment revealed the weakness of the monarchy's repressive elements (including the army), and in order to quiet these disorders local correspondents of the reformers at Versailles seized town governments in many provincial cities, as well as at Paris, organizing their own militia so as to restore popular discipline. As a result, the power of the reformers was reinforced and generalized, and the royal ministers were prevented from substituting coercion for reform. In short, the leaders of the Revolution took power when circumstances virtually threw it into their hands. Their objective was to reconstruct and to regenerate. There was no revolt.

The legislation of 1789-1792 fulfilled all the original purposes of the reformers. A limited monarchy was organized, with an elected parliament, a constitution, and a declaration of rights.<sup>3</sup> Local government was entrusted to elected councils. A just and proportionate system of taxation was set up. Old obstacles to the growth of industry and trade were cleared away. Special privileges were abolished in great number, including the pensions distributed by the Court to

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<sup>3</sup> Voting was not democratic. Under the established property qualifications about 4/7 of the adult males were admitted to the ballot, and only about 50,000 men were eligible for election to office. In 1789 there was no democratic movement.

favorites, offices which had been obtained by purchase, caste discrimination in military, naval, and judicial appointments, and, in 1790, the institution of nobility itself, hereditary or otherwise. Of the manorial dues imposed by landlords upon peasants in addition to rent, some were liquidated without compensation and others declared redeemable by the villagers. Judicial powers of *seigneurs* over peasants were terminated, and the compulsory tithe was cancelled. The administration of civil and criminal justice was completely overhauled, torture abolished, and trial under elected magistrates introduced.

The state being bankrupt, all the real property of the church was confiscated to serve as the basis of a new currency issue (together with coin and bullion). It followed that the clergy became dependent upon the state for maintenance and support. As dependents they were officeholders. As officeholders, it was reasoned, they should be chosen by election. From this train of considerations emerged the famous Civil Constitution of the Clergy, under which bishops and priests were to be chosen by electors of departments and districts and the Pope notified by letter of their nomination, an arrangement wholly unacceptable to Rome because of the Catholic theory of the priesthood and the sacramental theology. Therefore, clergymen were forbidden by the Papacy, under pain of excommunication, to accept the reorganization of the church, or to take the oath of allegiance to the new constitution required by the law.

Since by the end of 1791 the reformers had accomplished all that they had set out to do, the Revolution ought to have come to an end at that point. Instead by March, 1793, it had become democratic, coercive, and even totalitarian in the darkest twentieth-century meaning of the word. We see in this transition from moderacy to radicalism one of the many ironies of modern history, particularly ironic in that the defeat of the moderates was determined largely by the consequences of their own reforms. They were the victims of their own great aspirations to improve the lot of humankind and of that altruism which had given them the confidence and courage they needed. As we read the record of events every considerable decree they imposed upon France increased the number of Frenchmen resentful of their reforms. Thus, by the end of 1791 there existed a huge and formidable counterrevolutionary opposition consisting of nobles, about two-thirds of their clergy, thousands of ejected officeholders, troubled Catholic laymen, and hundreds of thousands of lower-class elements responsive to clerical and aristocratic leadership, particularly in the countryside. The King and his family were of the counterrevolution. His younger brother, having emigrated, managed to bring together an international coalition against the Revolution consisting of the monarchs of Prussia and of the Hapsburg Empire, and when in April of 1792 war was declared between these two powers on the one hand and France on the other the King and his wife betrayed French military secrets to the court of Vienna.

The war created an extreme feeling of anxiety and tension in Paris and the provincial cities. Threatened with counterrevolutionary subversives within and

counterrevolutionary armies without, the partisans of the Revolution demanded the displacement of the moderate leadership and the elevation of other types prepared to defend the Revolution by rigorous and even brutal expedients. In the course of this transition from moderation to radicalism, completed during the summer of 1793, the King was driven from the throne, later to be tried and executed, and a democratic republic was established, a republic, we hasten to add, in which the citizen was submitted to a severe discipline and close surveillance in the name of liberty, to approach the language of the times. That is to say, those who labored to defend liberty against its enemies were compelled to suspend it in its own interest.

It is a matter of record that during the Reign of Terror, as it is called, about 20,000 persons were condemned to death by "revolutionary courts" and that another estimated 300,000 persons were imprisoned as suspected counterrevolutionaries, some for nearly two years, under conditions which were far from agreeable. Unhappily we must add to the foregoing tabulation the several hundreds of suspects drowned at Nantes without trial,<sup>4</sup> those killed during the fighting at Lyon in the fall of 1793, and many thousands who died in the civil war that raged through the Vendée from 1793 to 1800.<sup>5</sup> The well-known "September Massacres" of 1792 in Paris disposed of 1,100 suspects in four days. These statistics, products of an exacting though sanguinary scholarship, omit many of the unrecorded atrocities of these years. And no means will ever be found of giving numerical expression to the enormous grief, anxiety, and agony felt by the terrorists and their victims alike. For during the Terror many of its own sponsors were sent to the scaffold by their rivals, others being subjected to vengeance and retaliation after the Terror had come to a close.

On the whole it must be said in defense of the radical leaders of the Revolution that history and particularly literature has dealt with them unjustly. While some of them, especially the faction of Danton, were undoubtedly corrupt, others were motivated by selfless ideals of patriotism and even of reform, seeing themselves as the stalwart defenders of revolutionary and national virtue arrayed against the determination of wicked men to re-enslave and debase the French people. They saw the issue as being moral, and some of them were convinced that through coercion and "purgation"<sup>6</sup> society might be prepared for a higher level of existence in which the citizen would exercise his liberties with that degree of responsibility without which democracy could not flourish. Such a man as Robespierre must be understood rather than vilified, and when he is understood his proscription

<sup>4</sup> Estimated at between 2,800 and 4,600, chained to the gunwales of barges scuttled in the Loire.

<sup>5</sup> Estimated by various authors at between 200,000 and 500,000. No quarter was given to prisoners taken in the fighting, either by republicans or by royalists. On one occasion 1,896 prisoners were executed by firing squads at Angers.

<sup>6</sup> The word "purgation" occurs in the documents. Exceptionally it may mean death and imprisonment, but ordinarily exclusion from political life.

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and execution, accomplished in July of 1794 by those who feared him, stand as the last act in a real tragedy of altruism and error.

The history of the period after the fall of Robespierre is quickly told. From that point forward power lay mainly in the hands of self-seekers and egoists, of which Bonaparte would appear to constitute the supreme example. As an attempt to ameliorate and elevate mankind the Revolution ended with the execution of Robespierre and of his faction.

In this brief and presumptuous account we note several truths which lay claim upon our curiosity. First, the circumstances out of which the Revolution arose were not purposely arranged by men. Second, the moderate leaders of the early Revolution undermined their own influence with every reform they enacted. Third, the radical leaders of the revolutionary Republic were obliged to rule by tyranny and in this way in spite of themselves destroyed the ideal of liberty they professed to serve. Moreover, they found themselves forced to inflict a continuous suppressive discipline compounded of punishment and fear upon a people whom they wished to benefit, and their situation led them with inexorable logic to a series of factional struggles in which they themselves were brought to the scaffold, one group after another. Finally a Revolution undertaken for the benefit of man, passing through stages of moderation and coercion, ended as an instrument of egoism and self-seeking.

These observations constitute the elements of an ironic appreciation of the French Revolution.

## II. PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH

By research the historian means the collection and verification of what is called fact, fact being the information or evidence or material of which a history is constructed. Fact is multitudinous, diverse, elusive, falsely reported and in the main lost beyond recovery. It can be sought expertly or improperly, intelligently or stupidly, honestly or dishonestly, and for this reason those professionally concerned with history have elaborated various principles governing research. Documents, for example, must be established as genuine and as accurately reflecting the intention of those who wrote them. They must be construed, insofar as possible, in the context in which they were first written. Finally, the historian is obliged to search out and to discover all documentary evidence which might possibly bear upon the subject he has chosen.

It is a curious fact of present-day scholarship that the recoverable body of evidence concerning the French Revolution is too vast for one man ever to examine in the course of his lifetime, so that the canons of research which we have just transcribed are only ideally attainable. We do not think, however, that they should be given up. Historians may be doomed to achieve only imperfect results, but in default of ideals such as these the results obtained will be grossly imperfect.

What kind of approach to research is deducible from the Christian faith?

The Christian sees history as the record of the struggles of men to work out their destinies under God either in submission or in defiance or in ignorance or in indifference. History is a mundane demonstration of Truths bestowed upon man by revelation. It has a meaning which is of divine order. Therefore, to misrepresent history to oneself or to others is to misrepresent or falsify divine instruction. To search out historical truth dishonestly or even foolishly is an affront to God. It endangers the salvation of those who are thereby deceived. Whether it is done deliberately or in lightness of heart, whether it is done for "good" reasons or "bad," it is as wrong as though a page of Scripture had been altered.

Now if what we have just written be true, as we firmly believe, it follows that a Christian is led naturally and by faith to a reverent observance of the strictest rules concerning the collection and evaluation of evidence. His responsibility is to no group, no party, no nation, no church, but to a Master who is universal and eternal and who holds him most strictly accountable for the right exercise of his calling. Whence it follows also that he is bound to declare all the imperfections of his work which he cannot repair, and to indicate publicly and by deliberate avowal the inadequate foundation of every thinly established judgment. In his vocation as in his life, therefore, his faith lays upon him the obligation of humility.

This being said, we go on to suggest that Christian historiography of the past has been marred by two sources of error. First, it has shown too much eagerness in accepting unsubstantiated reports of the miraculous. The simple credulity of an Einhard or of an Otto of Freising or of the writers of the *Acta sanctorum* (hardly exceeding, by the way, the credulity of Herodotus) can be no model for Christian scholarship. While the possibility of miracle is certainly to be acknowledged, a Christian historian will demand verification as a safeguard against every fictitious or fraudulent claim.

The second source of error has been an excessive veneration for the sanctity of a sect or of a religious movement or institution. Religious bodies, communities, congregations, organizations, though divinely inspired, are composed of men, and in the Christian view all men are imperfect. It follows then that churches too are fallible and those who lead them. (They are not thereby rendered incapable of accomplishing things desired of God.) The rule of practice is that all certified documentary evidence concerning the history of a church must be accepted as real and beyond alteration or concealment. No doubt it is a painful business for a Roman Catholic to write an account of the Renaissance popes (though Pastor has done it with wonderful honesty) or for a Calvinist to describe in full detail all of what was done at Geneva under Calvin or in Scotland under Knox. Lutherans, too, are likely to be troubled by the Reformer's acquiescence in the bigamy of Philip of Hesse, and Anglicans by some aspects of the marital revolutions of Henry VIII. All this may be deplorable, but it is fact, and more harm has been done by attempting to deny it than by honest and melancholy acknowledgement. It is, indeed, with an extreme sense of depression and even despair that one traces



successive failures of churches, the frequent corruption and dishonesty of clergymen, hypocrisy in the laity, self-interest dominating religious institutions, and the occasional subordination of churches by secular interests. But if history has value as demonstration, then these unpleasanties will have to be explored without illusions in the measure that they are verified by research. One of the chief beneficiaries of such a realism would be Christianity itself.

Our point is that it is possible to speak of a Christian empiricism, a scrupulous regard for temporal actuality, an insistence upon verification and substantiation, a refusal to accept dubious historical testimony, and finally a readiness to assent to those things which are abundantly certified by indisputable evidence, painful though they may be. This empiricism seems in our view to follow directly from the faith and to rule out partisan ecclesiastical history. It rules out also the kind of history written by such Catholic conservatives as M. Gaxotte and the Abbé Barruel, in which leaders of the reform movement are slandered, fictitious accounts of atrocities are concocted, conspiracies are described which never were formed, and large untruths of great consequence are justified by artful juggling of the evidence (which is omitted where convenient) or by subtle suggestion and insinuation. The division between good and evil during the Revolution followed no party or sectarian lines, and no historian should assume the contrary *a priori*.

For these reasons, those who follow the "scientific spirit" in historical research will find no problem with which they will deal in a manner which differs from the procedure of their Christian colleagues.

### III. INTERPRETATION

In historical scholarship an interpretation is a statement or implication of order, pattern, unity, or meaning perceived in the mass of what is known. It can be developed only after research has been completed, and then with great difficulty and at some hazard. Since interpretation is always speculative and controversial, historians have come to distrust it as "unscientific" and to prefer as an ideal the goal declared over a hundred years ago by the German scholar von Ranke—to write history "exactly as it happened."

On the whole Ranke's dictum, which has achieved a high level of authority in the profession, has led to salutary results. Out of it has come a strong tradition of skepticism tending to reduce, if not to abolish, an ancient propensity for self-delusion growing out of wild and uncontrolled conjecture. It has cleared the air of a good deal of uncertified and indefensible rubbish and submitted historians to a measure of discipline which has increased the trustworthiness of their books (while at the same time reducing their value as entertainment). We think that Christian historiography ought to be profoundly grateful for this emphasis upon painstaking and accurate description and for the many superbly reliable histories written under the direction of this school of procedure, and grateful, too, for the bibliographies, archival guides and directories, chronologies, and carefully pub-

lished documents which seem the natural products of such a scrupulous scholarly temperament. In fact, it would be impossible to get very far with the type of Christian history which we envisage except for the technical progress realized within the last century as a consequence of the so-called "scientific spirit" with which Ranke's name will always be identified.

Every idea, however, has its limitations, and this doctrine is no exception. If one were to write, for example, a history of the French Revolution "exactly as it happened" such a book would be interminable, for it would have to be complete. Under a rigorous application of the doctrine nothing could be omitted without prejudice to that full and complete knowledge which alone guarantees impartiality. Now the legislative debates of the Revolution from May 5, 1789, to January 4, 1794, have been published, in defective although convenient form. They come to eighty-two huge volumes ranging between six hundred and eight hundred pages apiece, each page covered with close print divided into columns for convenience, and even for the limited period covered they are said to be incomplete. When one considers the multitude of recorded words and acts and intentions to be found within the numerous public archives and libraries of France—correspondence of national and local offices and officials, discussions of revolutionary clubs, proceedings of department, district, and communal councils, newspapers, military orders and reports, judicial records of all types, administrative reports on price control and food administration—the impossibility of writing the history of the Revolution "exactly as it happened" becomes painfully obvious.

There must, therefore, be a selection of facts deliberately chosen from the total available material before a portable or comprehensible history of the French Revolution can be offered to the printer. On what basis will this selection be made? On the basis of the interest of the reader? That condemns us to reproduce our revolution in terms of current problems and controversies, introducing shades of emphasis and accentuation which constitute (along with the omissions) a distortion of the original. On the basis of "importance?" That implies a theory of causation which itself stands independent of the evidence. Obviously, therefore, the very process of reducing the material brings into play the personal judgement of the historian and excludes the possibility of a non-interpretative and impersonal account.

For illustration of the force of these difficulties we recur to the work of Francois-Alphonse Aulard, first to hold the chair in the history of the French Revolution established at the Sorbonne.<sup>7</sup> Aulard's great contribution to the historiography of the French Revolution was the emphasis he placed upon "scientific" procedures, objectivity, and impartiality. He really tried to write history "exactly

<sup>7</sup>Augustin Cochin, *La crise de l'histoire révolutionnaire: Taine et M. Aulard* (Paris, 1909), James L. Godfrey, "Alphonse Aulard (1849-1928)," in Bernadotte E. Schmitt, ed., *Some Historians of Modern Europe* (Chicago, 1942), 45-65. Paul Farmer, *France Reviews its Revolutionary Origins* (New York, 1943), 61-66. Georges Belloni, *Aulard, historien de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1949).



as it happened," and without minimizing the excellence of his scholarship one must observe that in his great *Histoire politique de la Révolution française* he is seen attributing motives on the basis of conjecture (although with fine regard for the evidence), framing statements of the sense of change (implying progress and degradation, which reflect ethical values), and arranging his material in such an order that an entire interpretation is implied. And when one finishes this book, as well as others inspired by Aulard or prepared under his direction, one has a fairly precise idea of who were the heroes of the French Revolution and who the villains. All this is interpretation. It is impossible for us to conceive of any non-interpretative work of synthetic history. He who wishes to avoid interpretation must content himself with reproducing the documents in their chronological order, without explanation and without discussion.<sup>9</sup>

Several interpretations of the French Revolution have been evolved by the historians of the subject, who constitute a profession within a profession. A few of them may be paraphrased here.

1. *Carlyle*: The French Revolution was a mob disturbance, violent, ruinous, and anarchic, showing that men require despotic government by an exceptional person (viz., Bonaparte).

2. *Hippolyte Taine*: The French Revolution was a failure and a disaster because the men who conceived it and directed it were seduced by oversimplified, defective, and insufficiently informed philosophy.

3. *Pierre Gaxotte and F. Funck-Brentano*: The French Revolution destroyed a stable, prosperous, legitimate, and comparatively equitable regime because of the extravagant philosophy of its leaders and the unreasonable and exaggerated complaints of the ignoble classes.

4. *Aulard*: The French Revolution was a wonderful demonstration of the democratic and patriotic genius of the French middle and lower classes. Betrayed by corruptionists into the hands of a dictator (Bonaparte), it inspired and foreshadowed the great Third Republic. (Justice requires us to note that this interpretation preceded the First World War.)

5. *Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre*: The French Revolution was a class struggle arising from the growth of French capitalism, during which the bourgeoisie smashed the aristocratic monarchy and the social order and established a state which it could control and which served its interests.

<sup>9</sup> (Paris, 1901).

\* We believe that the following historical operations are essentially interpretative in that they are determined not only by the evidence but also by experience and judgment accumulated apart from the evidence by the historian: the choice of a topic, selection and arrangement of the material, explanation (casual and motivational judgments), declarations of the "significance" of particular events or persons.

6. *Heinrich von Sybel*: The French Revolution showed the contemptible indiscipline of the French character (or Geist) and its inability to govern itself effectively and constructively. (The author was a German.)

It is easy for those outside this field of scholarship to imagine the powerful books which may be built around these themes, using factual information derived from research, and it is also easy to see how each of these writers developed an interpretation consistent with his own views, his nationality, his party affiliation, his social status, and the experience of the generation in which he shared. Doubtless, too, more personal elements and subtle influences, including those lying below the level of consciousness, played a part along with rational processes of choice in determining the interpretation developed by each. Aulard, for example, formulated his own views during the germinal period of the Third Republic and especially in the heat of the Dreyfus Affair (1898-1906): As a partisan of the *bloc républicain* against its conservative enemies, he tended to glorify the Jacobin Revolution of 1793-1794 while deprecating certain excess of the Reign of Terror which he attributed to Robespierre who became one of his villains. The work of Gaxotte and Funck-Brentano reflects the bitter nostalgia of French aristocratic society during the 1920's, conscious of the final disappearance of all hopes for a royal and aristocratic restoration. Jaurès was impressed with the growth of industry, finance capitalism, trade unions, and working-class socialism during the period 1890-1914, and this sense of the visible rise of capitalism in France, coupled with a fine humanitarian sentiment, led him naturally to Marxism. Mathiez seems to have developed his Marxist interpretation out of a preoccupation with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (and personal consideration well known in the profession). Lefebvre's Marxism was no doubt affected by the Great Depression of the thirties which seemed to indicate the final collapse of capitalism.

The Marxist interpretation currently prevails. M. Lefebvre, now an octogenarian and undoubtedly the most gifted, imaginative, and precise historian of any school ever to have written on the subject, presides over the French reviews with a fine sense of equity, discernment, and toleration, and distributes professional salvation or damnation to applicants for scholarly recognition. It must be said of him that, although a committed Marxist, he has demonstrated great facility in revising the class-struggle theory so as to bring it into agreement with new evidence emerging from research (which is seemingly interminable). Thanks to the triumph of Marxism in the French profession we have the same tradition ascendant among American historians in this field. The textbooks on the Revolution published by Gottschalk and Gershoy seem to have assured American treatment of the subject as a "bourgeois revolution," and it is spoken of in that fashion in nearly every survey text on modern European history.

On grounds of logic alone the practice of interpretation would seem to be subject to one sovereign rule. It is simply that every comment upon the evidence, every summary, every generalization, every explanation must agree with all the

verified data. No statement contradicted by fact can be permitted to stand. Even implications or insinuations of propositions contrary to fact (as in the specious selection and arrangement of material or in a cleverly framed question) are to be exposed and discarded. Furthermore, many interpretations of a single event compete for recognition and acceptance, and it may be that evidence remains insufficient to disprove all but one of them, in which case one must admit that those passing the test of scrutiny remain possibly true, even though in conflict with one another.

An interpretation is comprised of three elements: first, a theory of causation; second, a concept of pattern, and third, a sense of purpose or direction in the movement of events. The causal elements in interaction constitute a pattern, however diverse, and the pattern of causes and consequences is seen to display the purpose.

When one tries to determine to his own satisfaction what counts as causal in history he finds himself in the midst of a discussion begun over a hundred years ago. The disagreement continues. Some scholars have stressed the preponderant or even determining role of a single category of events, such as the economic, or the geographical-climatic, or the national or even racial traits of a powerful and aggressive people. To the Marxist all action and belief reflect one's attachment to the social class, so that everything that is done is a more or less successful response to class interest, class organization and interest being determined by economic and physical factors. When all is said and done one can only state what is obvious, that the field of action comprises a series of human responses to external stimuli and internal compulsions. (Even the pure environmentalist will have to recognize the mind as a way-station in the causal train of events.)

It is easy to write this, but not so easy to indicate the bewildering sweep of phenomena involved in the statement. What are called external stimuli are studied in the so-called "social sciences"—economics, politics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and all derivatives, which describe the terms on which men are condemned to live. In recent years historians have with great success and profit combined economic studies with the traditional interest in domestic and international politics, and at the present time excursions are being made into sociological and even psychological modes of interpretation. All this demands a versatility not often developed in a single individual. Nevertheless for the field of the French Revolution this extension of coverage has produced the important researches of Labrousse on eighteenth-century price movements, the work of Marion and Braesch on governmental finance, the studies of Lefebvre, Loutchisky, Bloch and others on land tenure, the work of Festy, Lefebvre, and Sée on agricultural and industrial techniques, and the various monographic materials dealing with monetary inflation, institutional changes, price control, land redistribution and military reorganization. In a sense which it is impossible briefly to demonstrate, no reliable history of our subject could be written without incorporating the materials of these researches.

Now in a Christian view of the Revolution all this material would be relevant. It describes the conditions in the presence of which men choose to do good or evil. It places limitations on human hopes and expectations and helps to explain the failure of this enterprise or that. It demonstrates the obstacles that are set up between man and God—abundance of mundane satisfactions to absorb the attentions, patterns of social conduct which discourage behavior of a religious or moral sort, political and religious persecutions, climates of optimism and despair, alterations in work and environment which modify outlook and habit. None of this, we believe, is unknown to the biblical concept of man. Furthermore, it contributes to that wide range of understanding which is the aim of Christian scholarship. But we must emphasize that we do not expect complete satisfaction in this area of learning. No purely environmentalist or mechanistic concept of history will be acceptable under Christian postulates. For one thing, the "internal compulsions" which we have mentioned count for a great deal, and for another thing the various causal developments—economic, political, social, diplomatic, and even physical and meteorological—combine so intricately, seem so complex, yield such an unassimilable mass of data, that no complete comprehension will ever be possible. Indeed, this intricacy constitutes one of the "areas of unaccountability" which we shall describe at a later point.

By "internal compulsions" we mean those promptings from the interior at which psychologists guess on the basis of their investigations, and which would seem to determine differences in human response to external provocations as well as human acts for which no external provocations can be discovered. Although our readings in psychology are limited we note that social psychologists frequently draw up tentative lists of motivations and discuss motivation-patterns with great interest. In addition, we have the entire Freudian tradition, the social implications of which have been recently extended by Erich Fromm and Karen Horney, setting before us a chart of the mind peopled with strange and even animalistic forces which conceal themselves from discovery even as they struggle for mastery over "the will."

History has not made much use of this disconcerting and often frightening lore. And yet it would be an error to suppose that historians have had nothing to say about psychology. Psychology is always implied in what they write and sometimes expressly discussed. When, for example, a historian presents Mirabeau as a person motivated entirely by ambition he is making a psychological judgment (and a poor one). When a historian discusses the character of Louis XVI and the peculiar limitations that had so much to do with his failure and his death, he is making a psychological judgment. When a historian speaks of various leaders and groups as manifesting "bourgeois" attitudes and patterns of actions he is making a psychological judgment. Probably professional history has more to learn from a reading of the psychological literature than from any other domain of knowledge,

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for the range of motivations recognized as valid in most histories is rather narrow—considerations of party advantage, national patriotism, religious faith, economic advantage, and (occasionally) social conditioning. In the field of revolutionary studies some very impressive psychological analyses have already been produced, particularly by Lefebvre in his detailed study of the Great Fear and in his superb essay on "Revolutionary Mobs," wherein he discussed the bewildering variety of motives, rational and irrational, displayed by the rioting crowds of 1789. We think too that the several studies of C. Crane Brinton in this field have displayed a good deal of keen psychological insight.

Now if professional history is prepared to recognize the relevancy of the internal impulsions identified (however uncertainly) by psychology, the Christian historian has an additional interest which springs from his faith. In the Christian view of man it is the individual, not the mass, that is important. It is not the entirety of men that is judged, but rather each individual in his own self. Moreover, it would be a grotesque disfiguration of Christian belief to suppose that men are motivated entirely through external elements which impinge upon their consciousness. The confrontation of a man with his Creator, for example, is an internal and not an external event. Finally, we see in all this psychological literature a striking accord with the Christian doctrine of the sinful nature of man. Whatever Freud may have said about religion as a troublesome burden upon the mind, he did succeed in making it abundantly clear that the doctrine of the "natural goodness of man" which has proved so formidable a barrier to faith in recent times is simply another eighteenth-century fable. To the Christian, therefore, these tabulations of motivation "ring true" and suggest the assessment of human nature with which the Bible, and particularly the New Testament, is pervaded.

We think, therefore, that a Christian history of the French Revolution would be distinguished by the large and hospitable recognition it would accord to psychological learning in all its branches—behavioristic, Gestalt, Freudian, and social. It is, of course, no longer possible to psychoanalyze men of other times, and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise. The major change that follows from this shift of emphasis is a difference in one's "feel" for human nature, his knowledge that the avowed reasons for an act are often wrong or secondary, that a character is molded in part by obscure domestic events of his infancy and childhood, and that action patterns seen later in life have something to do with one's early relations with his parents or with traumatic experiences over which the consciousness has since drawn a veil.

The most conspicuous result of this altered "feel" for human nature is to destroy the belief that men are fundamentally uniform, even within a given social or national category, and that to explain the action of a given individual it suffices



to know the social category to which he belongs. We concede at once that insofar as the assumption of human uniformity is outlawed all our problems of interpretation become more complex, indeed hopelessly so, but in the explanation of a given act or attitude or intention we think we are on more "realistic" ground.

Among other things we are less inclined to "heroize" or to "demonize" historical discussion than we would otherwise have been. All men are imperfect and obliged to do at least some wrong. On the other hand, all men have at least the capacity for doing good, whether that capacity is awakened or not. We anticipate that many who attempt to do good end by accomplishing the contrary because of their imperfections and their faults. Our attitude toward such persons is one of sympathy and sorrow, not of condemnation. The Christian is scripturally forbidden to pronounce a condemnation. He must regard all the miserable population of his little story as suffering men, deserving of compassion rather than judgment. Now compassion leads not to approval but to understanding, for the only manner in which an historical personage can be understood is for the historian to undertake a momentary exercise of the imagination in which he temporarily assumes in his own mind the identity of the person to be understood and proceeds to surround himself with all the cares, anxieties, temptations, troubles, and necessities of the person to be understood. Only in such a conjectural operation does the conduct of an individual become credible. Seen from this point of view, the Christian appraisal of an historical personage becomes intimate rather than "judgmental" and leads to an analysis which is in a special and important way "plausible" rather than contrived.

Our theory of causation, therefore, conceives of a field of human activities modified by external circumstances and comprehensible (though not predictable) through concepts of the social sciences and psychology.

But it is important not to promise too much, and particularly to ourselves. No matter how carefully and completely a "causal field" be reconstructed in an interpretation there will always remain, we think, an element of "the accidental." Accident is the unpredictable convergence of otherwise unrelated causes contributory to a final result. That is, among the causal elements are certain events concerning which no forecast could have been made, mainly because the data necessary to such a forecast lay beyond reach. Such events as natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, conflagrations, epidemics, droughts) count as inexplicable intrusions of physical and biological phenomena into an otherwise self-sufficient and self-generating fabric of cause and effect. These geophysical, meteorological, and biological happenings disrupt and alter a pattern which in other respects we see as ordered and comprehensible because it explains itself, because it contains within itself all the motive forces or tendencies necessary to give it motion. Their appearance in an historical development establishes an area of unaccountability



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and even of mystery which is closed to human analysis. This area of unaccountability seems to us a sort of secluded preserve in which historical surprises are cultivated and wherein analysis is forbidden.

As an instance of such an "accident" we offer the sudden hailstorm which preceded the grain harvest of 1788, destroyed a substantial proportion of the crop, and assured the famine and the popular disorders of the following spring. "If bread had been cheap," writes Lefebvre, "the brutal intervention of the people, which was indispensable to assure the destruction of the old regime, would perhaps not have occurred, and the bourgeoisie would have triumphed less easily."<sup>10</sup> An unpredictable and unaccountable fact, therefore, of enormous significance, of which no historian can trace the origin.

As a second instance of "accident" we offer the peculiar personality of Louis XVI, that generous and serious but indecisive man who contributed gravely to the course of events. No doubt much of what we call his character (for want of a better word) was the result of his conditioning, particularly in point of religious piety and attachment to royal absolutist tradition. But it would be foolish to ignore his slowness of wit and comprehension and his tendency toward clumsy corpulence which combined to invest him with a sense of inferiority, boredom with office, preference for hunting and for mechanical hobbies, and a fatal capacity for choosing unfortunate ministers and advisers. To see the importance of this situation we have only to ask ourselves whether the Revolution would have gotten very far in the reign of Louis XIV, Henri IV, or Frederick II. Now the explanation of these two handicaps, of mentality and of appearance, demands a genealogical investigation of great care and beyond the genealogy some genetic research of an impossible character. Genetics itself might have established the odds in favor of the birth of a man with such limitations (were all barriers to investigation set aside), but any absolute prediction would have been unwarranted, and particularly the absolute prediction that such a person would have been born as heir to the throne.

This realm of "accident" or mystery, we think, extends also to the ordinary turmoil of decision-making which political history has got to register. Given the present state of our psychological knowledge, no completely mechanistic theory of behavior has yet been achieved in which all of one's decisions are determined by external events, so that the decision of one man in a given situation would be expected to agree with that of another. The mechanistic view of human nature remains a hope of the behaviorists rather than a demonstrated fact, and it is because in Soviet Russia the theory of human unanimity is needed to make the Stalinist ideology succeed that Pavlovian behaviorism has been decreed sovereign, the

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<sup>10</sup>G. Lefebvre, *Documents relatifs à l'histoire des subsistances dans le district de Bergues (1788-an-V)* (2 vols., Lille and Paris, 1914-1921), I, xxxviii.

Freudian school having been banished or driven under ground. It is our impression and belief that the individual remains capable of presenting some unexpected responses or surprises both to the psychologist and to the totalitarian clique. (These surprises will be denied by the Soviet psychologist and punished by the Soviet state, with no loss of assurance by either.) Such a view seems to us consistent not only with Christian belief but also with psychological knowledge.

Confronted with these areas of unaccountability or accident or chance, one finds himself obliged to adopt one of four concepts of causal pattern. Either (1) history is an assemblage of ill-assorted developmental strands (social and economic development, international rivalries, quiet genetic combination patterns producing weak kings, and unchartable cloud systems in motion producing hail storms), working aimlessly and purposelessly to yield to all kinds of surprises; or (2) history is governed by a deterministic interrelationship between events of which we have not grasped the essential explicatory principle, in which case the secret may be sought either in science or in faith or it will never be discovered at all because of the limitations of the human mind; or (3) history is permitted to grow and "happen" in its own way, but from time to time the self-determining system is altered by an external and purposeful intervention; or (4) men freely make history within the scope of environmental limitations, but are punished for all acts that violate governing principles of a moral order. Of these concepts the third and fourth can logically be combined; and by an extension of reason which would demand much charity from a theologian, they can be made to agree with the second.<sup>11</sup>

The first of these four concepts may be called anarchic, and it is widely held. It permits of a comprehensive discussion of past events but no discussion whatsoever of the future. No Christian can sustain it except upon the assumption that God has turned his back upon man or is dead, having died long ago, as Nietzsche said, of a broken heart (both assumptions being inadmissible).

The second concept is deterministic or necessitarian, and it has been given expression by both Christians and non-Christians. A non-Christian determinist sees the chain of cause and effect as a demonstration of the order of the universe and may or may not hope that reason can comprehend the system sufficiently to permit of prediction. A Christian determinist would conceive of history as a fore-ordained chain of cause and effect entirely foreknown and foreseen by God at the moment of the Creation. What we know of it we know by Revelation, but the remainder is comprehensible only imperfectly, if at all.

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<sup>11</sup> That is, history may be predetermined, and one may accept predetermination on grounds of faith; yet he cannot grasp the deterministic system in its entirety, so that he is left to deal with a pattern which appears to contain an element of freedom. History makes sense to him only as it supposes limited free will, and it is the conception comprehensible to one's mind with which one concerns himself in forming temporal judgments.

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The third alternative, involving an occasional intervention, cannot be accepted by a materialist. It presupposes the existence of an omnipotent Being willing to accord man sufficient autonomy for the accomplishment of a purpose divinely conceived but unwilling to permit the final triumph of what is forbidden. Such a Being would have unlimited power to intervene in human affairs and enterprises but would suspend the full or total exercise of that power in order to leave some free will in the hands of man. The intervention might be accomplished either through direct influence over the minds of men or through subtle and effective manipulation of the multifarious circumstances which prompt human action (as in the hailstorm that led to the famine that assured the Revolution).

The fourth view constitutes a general expression of either classic tragedy or biblical irony, according as one wishes to fill in the equation. In either scheme suffering is the merited consequence of wrong and presumptuous acts, and the historian is obliged to observe that the suffering is marked by a certain solidarity in which the innocent receive punishment with the guilty, and wrongs of fathers are visited upon many generations. In short, a collective responsibility is implied. (Wives and daughters of aristocrats and terrorists perish with the men, and the little son of Louis XVI dies pitifully in prison from torment and mistreatment.)

Given these last three concepts of pattern, it becomes possible to suggest that for the Christian there can be no historical accident. The accidental is the causal area wherein operates a divine Intelligence or Purpose which is said to be, among other things, Lord of History. But in what sense Lord of History? The phrase is easier to pronounce than to make explicit. Whatever happens happens by God's will, but however this may be accomplished, the vision of the Christian historian is restricted. He finds himself frequently surprised and disconcerted. He perceives in the broad canvas of the record of his civilization a dim sense of divine purpose without fully grasping all details of the process whereby the purpose is realized. He learns enough, that is, to make him humble and responsible, but not enough, we think, to make him immoderate and reckless. Above all he must avoid the temptation rashly to confer God's favors upon a particular party or sect or nation. The boast "Gott mit uns!" written by German troops during the First World War received a terrible and ironic refutation, and during the American Civil War the commanders of both Northern and Southern troops publicly attributed their victories (and perhaps correctly) to the same Deity.

In other words, the Christian approach to the study of the French Revolution must be one of humility and restraint. There can be for us no dogmatic claims of perfect and detailed understanding. What we have is a Christian historical temperament and not a Christian historical calculus.

What difference does this temperament make in application?

It implies, as we have said, a careful and scrupulous type of scholarship, capable of correcting all erroneous *a priori* notions.

It implies also a broad range of consideration in the scope of which the concepts of psychology and the social sciences would have a place.

It means a sympathetic and understanding treatment of all men and all groups, the objective being to understand rather than to judge.

Finally it provokes a stronger interest in the defeats of history than in the victories. Everyone knows that the history of France since 1789 displays a series of turning-points (or crises, or climatic events) which seem naturally to mark off certain segments of the narrative in self-contained chapters. Such are the dates 1789, 1792, 1794, 1799, 1814, 1815, 1830, 1848, 1851, 1870, 1940 and 1944. On each of these occasions it was suddenly and sensationally made obvious that a new cause or movement or party had triumphantly installed itself in the governing places of national life, along with its hopes and its traditions. Now on the whole, though not entirely, historians are overly impressed with success and overly neglectful of failure, because success makes a better story than failure. Triumph is emphasized, therefore, while defeat is neglected. Those historians who approve the change in question speak of it as a victory, conceived in just and glorious necessity, while those who deplore the change describe it as a victory born of foul and sinful conspiracy.

What is bound to impress the Christian historian in this record of unstable and transitory French political experiments is that in the end all of them came to shipwreck. And he is bound to seek explanations for these shipwrecks not only in the rise of competitive movements but also in the internal weaknesses, errors, and misdirection contributory to the collapse. Each of these transfers of power appears to us as a judgment of the fallen rather than as a vindication of the triumphant, and we are prompted thereby to inquire whether each of these enterprises did not display certain self-destructive tendencies and whether these self-destructive tendencies did not reflect errors and shortcomings long known and comprehended under the Christian definition of sin.

Now this emphasis of interest in the checks and checkmates of history arises quite naturally out of two areas of reflection, spiritual and temporal. On the one hand, one's faith leads him to suspect that undertakings originating in pride or cupidity ultimately destroy themselves. Otherwise Hell triumphs and the Gospel makes no sense. And on the other hand all the historical testimony of this century serves to expose the illusion of mundane success and of increasing mundane security with which until recently it has been possible to console and even to inspire ourselves. Faith and reason alike reject the idea of progress as it has been form-

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ulated since the Renaissance. Whether there can be a Christian doctrine of mundane progress is a question deserving of a serious answer. No doubt theology has a solution to this problem, but at the moment we have none. At any rate we are satisfied that no Christian doctrine of mundane progress could assume a purely secularized "reason" or "science" as a motive force. In order to become truly sufficient to human needs reason must be subordinated to the tutelage of the Revelation.

Niebuhr has recently written a book on the American people in which he calls attention to the "ironies" of our present situation.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the atomic weapons we have developed out of our technology have fallen into the hands of those who would like to use them for our subjugation. Such ideas as justice and freedom, essential components of our heritage, have been appropriated by adversaries who have altered them so as to show us as neither just nor free. We believe ourselves most plentifully provided with the instruments of power but we see no way in which we can use those instruments for what we conceive as good. On any comparative basis our record of "imperialism" has yet been innocent, and yet we are compelled for the defense of our own values to intervene in the affairs of other peoples in such a way that we incur (in the judgment of other men) the "guilt" of imperialism. Having gone further than any nation in reducing the environment to our uses and necessities, we find ourselves less free, less emancipated from the control of external circumstance, than in the infancy of our history.

Many further contradictions are adduced to demonstrate a situation which is called neither pathetic nor tragic but ironic, and irony is distinguished from the other two terms in the following passage:

An ironic situation is distinguished from a pathetic one by the fact that a person involved in it bears some responsibility for it. It is distinguished from a tragic one by the fact that the responsibility is not due to a conscious choice but to an unconscious weakness . . . The Christian preference for an ironic interpretation is derived not merely from its conception of the nature of human freedom, according to which man's transcendence over nature endows him with great creative possibilities which are, however, not safe against abuse and corruption. It is also derived from its faith that life has a center and source of meaning beyond the natural and social sequences which may be rationally discerned. This divine source and center must be discerned by faith because it is enveloped in mystery, though being the basis of meaning. So discerned, it yields a frame of meaning in which human freedom is real and valid and not merely tragic or illusory. But it is also recognized that man is constantly tempted to overestimate the degree of his freedom and forget that he is also a creature. Thus he becomes involved in pretensions which result in ironic refutations of his pride."<sup>13</sup>

We think that a Christian interpretation of the French Revolution would follow essentially the scheme that Niebuhr has traced here, and that the capital problem

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<sup>12</sup>Reinhold, Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

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considered in a Christian history of that event would be that the hopes and expectations of revolutionary factions, though nobly conceived, were bitterly rewarded with contradictory results. Each reversal would seem to us to have the character of a rebuke. And we should seek the explanation for it not only in multifarious "external circumstances" but also, and most appropriately, in the errors, self-deceptions, and pretensions cultivated by the reformers themselves.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-168.



# Commission and Obedience in Christian Education

by JAMES MELVIN PEET

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *In the following paragraphs I have tried to raise some fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of Christian education. They were read in slightly different form to my colleagues in the Faculty Christian Fellowship at Stetson University, who received them with an affectionate courtesy that was by no means uncritical. On the background of a few summary theological propositions, I try to draw the basic outlines of the Christian Liberal Arts college. I next essay a description of the office of the Christian teacher. In finally presenting some ramifications of all this for a teacher of history I am confined by the limits of of my own specialty, but I would regard this view of Christian education as applicable to any academic field.*

## SOME THEOLOGICAL PROPOSITIONS

1. The Word of God reveals to the Church that man is a creature who has willfully fallen from his created glory and exists altogether in the wrong. The Word reveals to the Church that Jesus Christ has put fallen man back into the right once and for all, and that the evils of man's present wasted existence shall not ultimately undermine his beatific destiny. This is one way of expressing that which gives life, direction, and *raison d'être* to the Church. This is the truth which impels the Church to work at her task.

2. The task of the Church is her commission by the Word to preach, witness and teach to all nations the revelation she receives. In a peculiar and subordinate way, Christian educators are committed to this task.

3. The Church's performance of her three-fold task of preaching, witnessing, and teaching depends upon the gift of *pistis*. (a) This is to be understood above all as *faith*—God's unvarying faithfulness in his promise of salvation to the lost creation. (b) Consequently, it is to be understood as *gift*—an event in time wherein the loving God fulfills his promise to the creature. (c) Finally it is to be understood as *obedience-in-trust*, a God-given qualification of the creature through which he is able to receive revelation and its benefits—an implanted organ of perception through which the Word is heard. Faith is the receptive capacity for God's Word, and it is given in the event of revelation. Qualified by faith a man trusts God and undertakes the work to which the Word commits him.

4. The Word of God which the Church acknowledges and serves is spoken from time to time (3b above) to an existing situation of sin and death which is irremediable by man. Only God knows this situation as it is. The Word of God informs the

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Church of this situation and of God's purpose with respect to it. The Church believes this message and lives in terms of it.

5. Man lives in this situation into and about which the Word of God speaks. Man has wrestled with the situation, taken up innumerable attitudes and postures towards it, and worked out countless interpretations of it. Man's having done this is part of the situation. The Church has also done this, and its having done it is also part of the situation. Kierkegaard is as much a part of the situation as Nietzsche is—Roosevelt as much as Hitler—Athanasius as much as Arius—the Bible as much as Homer—the *jus naturale* as much as the *jus civile*—the *Declaration of Independence* as much as the *Communist Manifesto*. Man has believed that he could master the situation, or at least come to terms with it; or else he has believed that the situation cannot be overcome.

6. The Church differs from the rest of mankind in that she hears from time to time (3b above) what the Word says about the situation, and lives in terms of the pronouncement. Of all mankind, she alone is permitted to know the situation with neither illusion nor despair.

7. In her preaching and witnessing tasks, the Church proclaims the Word and its message to and about the situation to believers and non-believers. Preachers and witnesses testify to the Word by proclaiming it to situation-involved men.

8. In her teaching task, the Church fearlessly, sympathetically and lovingly confronts and analyzes the situation itself in terms of what she has heard about it from the Word. For believing students, the Church does this explicitly; for non-believing students she does it implicitly. But in both cases, whether believers and non-believers are segregated or integrated, the Christian teacher testifies to the Word by undertaking intrepid cognizance of the situation.

9. The task of a proper theology is to inquire about the faithfulness of the Church. It strives to measure the testimony of the Church about the Word of God against the revealed Word itself. Insofar as the Church is faithful, she strives to become faithful; she labors to check her faithfulness against the faithfulness of her Lord, and this inevitably involves theological effort. Theology must find out whether the Church is preaching, witnessing, and teaching about the Word of God, or about some other word. A proper theology measures the faithfulness of the Church in all of the phases of her work. A proper theology, therefore, will also be a theology of Christian education.

10. To perform its task, theology must know the Word of God. But theology has no special keys to special doors. It depends, in every time, moment by moment, upon revelation for knowledge of the Word of God (3b above), and like the entire Church remains utterly dependent upon God for the power to do its work.

## COMMISSION AND OBEDIENCE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

### THE CHRISTIAN LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

The Christian college undertakes to work at the teaching task of the Church. In so doing, it necessarily functions in subordination to the larger task of the Church—the world-wide program of preaching, witnessing and teaching. Nevertheless, the subordination of the Christian college to the larger program of the Church involves the reversal of this list within the college. Teaching, not preaching, comes first; preaching, not teaching, comes last. The Christian college's first task is to take intrepid cognizance of the situation. Secondly, it strives to preach the Word in the light of which it works at this task. In addition, it teaches religion and theology and engages in theological work, seeking to measure the performance of its teaching and preaching against the revealed Word and its commission.

The Christian college, therefore, comprises, under the protective and sustaining supervision of the Church, two main divisions. One of these divisions is a liberal arts school which represents the situation. The other is a theological school which represents the Church as related to, and part of, the situation.

In the constitution of the liberal arts school the college cannot take the Church's theological position any more seriously than it does the many other ideologies which participate in the situation. If it does so, it reveals that it has not remained faithful to its Lord and his commission, has not heard, or has not understood, the Word. In this division, the college obeys its commission and takes the situation seriously precisely by witnessing to the God-given insight into the situation's ultimate impotence. That is why the liberal arts school's teachers and students are recruited trustingly out of the highways and hedgerows, out of the great variety of Christian, non-Christian, and anti-Christian commitments. The subject-matter that is taught and learned in this division and the techniques by which it is disseminated are determined upon by the situation and its demands. The college itself and the Church have no situation-transcending criteria for choosing and rejecting subjects and methods. Its being a Christian college depends, not upon its possession of such criteria, but entirely upon the commission it has received to courageously confront and analyze the situation, and upon the obedience with which it responds to the commissioning Word.

The theological school has three functions to perform in the college. First, it has charge of the college chapel pulpit and works at the preaching task. Second, it teaches religion and theology in the liberal arts school on an equal footing with other disciplines and departments. Third, its staff, or a portion of it, works at the constructive and critical tasks of theology. These functions require the Church carefully to handpick the teachers who perform them according to criteria that are peculiar to the larger task of her world-wide endeavor. They are chosen in all of the urgency which the Church feels in the pursuit of her preaching task, and they are required in addition to be capable of presuming no special prerogatives in their liberal arts teaching roles.

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### THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER AS SUCH

The Christian liberal arts teacher makes his effort to testify to the Word by entering into the situation and teaching about it while submitting to its programs and abiding by its selections. As compared to those who work in the larger program of the Church, he plays a humble role—something in the nature of an *incognito*. As part of the situation the Christian liberal arts teacher values chemistry more highly than home economics; humanities more highly than business English. Let it be reiterated here that it is precisely this obedience to the commission, this undistinguishing submission to the situation that justifies this teacher's designation as Christian. Though there is no ultimate justification for such priorities in evaluation, the situation itself dictates preferences, and in terms of them the teacher may be expected to work with verses of Yeats rather than Guest; or with handbooks of science rather than manuals of necromancy. He does this because he has been commissioned by the Word to fearlessly confront and analyze the situation. He does not possess the possibility of shedding any ultimate light on the situation, discernible or otherwise. Therefore he does not work for the production of results. Rather he works from his commission in the hope of being permitted to be obedient to it. Obedience consists in fearlessly confronting and analyzing the situation. Obedience means that he has received the commission and has been animated by the promise that accompanies it.

The results of obedience are worth describing. They do not by any likelihood or necessity consist of wiser students, higher grades, better citizens, a longer life, a more prosperous school, greater prestige, a peaceful world, a healthier body, etc. Rather they consist, for the teacher, in fellowship with God, fuller knowledge of human disobedience, a consequent deepening of the teacher's joy in the promise of salvation, and generally in a happier and more abundant life for him. As it is written, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This is an important point because Christian educators are prone to take their cues from non- or anti-Christian educators rather than from their own Source and Way. Like their un-Churchly brethren, they fancy that their task is to further something; to buttress, promote, advance, secure, propagate, and guarantee something. They believe that they can accomplish something, achieve results, and effectively use techniques. Of course, they actually can do this, but they do not perceive that their manipulations are exactly the same as those of the un-Churchly brethren, and their achievements also: namely, just other articulations of the situation.

It is a part of the situation that the Christian teacher (or the Christian man, or the Christian college!) distinguishes himself from the situation. (1) Such a distinction is erroneous, invidious, and debilitating when it is based upon the presumption that his religiosity puts him in possession of a truth which he can pass on,

and which has certain influences and effects. The truth and power of God's Word are never transferred from God's possession to any man's. For this reason, the results of the Christian teacher's work, as regards anything outside God's relationship to him as a separate individual in the secrecy of address and response, are just as questionable and ambiguous, and just as thoroughly a part of the situation, as the results of the non- or the anti-Christian teacher's work. Results of the sort in which the religious man can function as an instrument, or toward which he can relate himself as a vessel, channel, or mediator, cannot, therefore, animate the Christian teacher as such. These animate him only as he is part and parcel of the situation. (2) It is not part of the situation, however, when the Word actually distinguishes the Christian teacher by calling him to work in its service. This distinction is valid and edifying because it is based upon the actuality of the teacher's having heard the Word, and thus the call to trust and obedience. Having heard the Word of salvation and having received the commission to teach about the situation in accordance with the Word's pronouncement upon it qualifies the Christian teacher to distinguish himself from the situation. But the distinction is secret, not manifest; it is of faith, not works. It gives him the impulse and power to obey, not the impulse and power to achieve, in the world-historical sense.

The Christian teacher's task, then, is to fearlessly confront and analyze the situation. In the performance of this work he is solely responsible to his Lord who has commissioned him. He does this work because he has been commissioned to do it. Any man who undertakes this teaching task without this commission, who undertakes it in pursuit of results, and who undertakes it at the direction of result-seekers, this man is a secret agent of the situation.

The situation exists in the realm of the creation where men, in fulfilling their allotted spans, apprehend it in part (because of their finitude) and in error (because of their sin). The sin consists in the subservience of men to the wiles of the Devil (which were resisted by Jesus Christ), and it is this that makes the situation sinful and deadly. Into this situation comes the Word of God "raising of these stones" (fallen and lost men), "children unto Abraham" (the Church). Out of the Church come preachers, teachers, and witnesses. The preachers testify to the Word by speaking about it to situation-entangled men. The teachers testify to the Word by taking intrepid cognizance of the situation. As believers they may apprehend it without anxiety, yet with seriousness. Preachers work at proclamation, and teachers engage in scientific work.

Science here denotes nothing more than the perennial efforts of the creature to cope through analysis and understanding with the problematical character of the situation. Nothing so exclusive as the modern confinement of the term to the so-called "natural" sciences is intended. The term is employed here rather to designate whatever methods men have used or will use in seeking knowledge and control of the situation. As used here, the term "science" is intended to include many diverse



disciplines—e.g., mystical contemplation, divination, astrology, alchemy, magic—and not just the modern mathematical and natural sciences. This usage of the word “science” may seem trifling or nihilistic at first glance. It should be noted that the various methods of situation-coping have distinguishing characteristics which endear them to some historical epochs and discredit them in others. The natural and mathematical sciences are in vogue in the current historical epoch of our civilization, while many other disciplines are out of favor. All of these methods, however, are equal in their total participation in the situation, and in their uselessness against it. (See theological propositions 4 and 5 above.) Only the revealing Word itself transcends, illuminates, and subjects the situation. In the context of this event, and under the resulting commission, the preacher emphasizes the *Word* which transcends, illuminates, and subjects the situation. That is why the Christian preaching of a past era is more likely to edify us than the Christian (and scientific) teaching of the same past era. On the other hand, in the context of the event of revelation and its commission, the teacher emphasizes the *situation* which the Word transcends, illuminates, and subjects. That is why the science and pedagogy of past eras tend to seem eccentric and old-fashioned. The teacher participates in scientific work because it is his part in the Church’s work to testify to the Word and its message about the situation by inquiring into it fearlessly, knowing in faith that it is overcome in Jesus Christ and ultimately powerless.

#### THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER OF HISTORY

Some Christian teachers participate in scientific work by inquiring into the history of the situation or some aspect of it. In certain respects historical work is, for them, the most exacting of all scientific fields because (1) all that exists has history—it comes into existence, exists, and passes out of existence. Not only so, but (2) the histories of separate entities are interrelated and interdependent. For example (and very broadly), the spirit-realm, both benign and malign; the nature-realm, both animate and inanimate; and the human realm, both social and individual; all impinge and react upon each other very complicatedly; and the historian must apprehend them in this behavior as accurately as possible. Furthermore, (3) everything situational-existential-historical is, for situation-entangled men (and thus also for the teacher), phenomenal. When the situation engages in scientific investigation of itself, it cannot tell whether the phenomena it views are illusory (as in Christian Science and oriental mysticism), or manifestations to be faced with skeptical resignation (as in antinomian historiography such as Herbert Fisher’s), or cinematographic projections of underlying reality or law (as in Toynbee and modern science generally), or realities comprehensible only in the light of divine revelation (as in Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity).

Finally, (4) the Christian history teacher, though manifestly situation-involved, apprehends the creation and its history, and thus also the situation, not



only phenomenally (as a sinner), but also really (as a believer). He has, through faith in Jesus Christ, information about the situation which secretly distinguishes him from it, and which the situation can possess only as hypothesis. In faith he perceives the fundamental importance of time; he knows that whatever exists has history—that everything situational exists processionally from the beginning of its allotted span to the end. In faith, he sees God's government of the existential procession. He sees in Jesus Christ how God regulates all creaturely activity toward Himself as a matter of justification, salvation, and blessedness, so that scientific laws, to the degree that they have actuality at all, are merely the form and order of creaturely activity. They are reminiscent for him of God's law and His promises, and he knows in faith that God does not rule men so much through the laws of nature, as that He rules men and the laws of nature together, in the same way and upon the same plane. He sees God's government of creation, in view of the situation, as a miracle which proves God's freedom and superiority, and which immediately relativizes all of those other determinants to which the creature is seemingly subject. He knows in faith that the events of history—even the illusions in it and in men's minds about it—are real. In faith he knows that the triune God created the world and that he did so not only in awareness that men would fall but also with actual provision against this evil in a covenant or salvation-plan.

In faith he sees Jesus Christ as the center, the fulcrum, the turning-point of history. He sees certain persistent factors in the midst of world events which show up in the cross-light of faith the form, the direction, and the management of history. These are: First, the history of the Jews in which the believing historian sees the persistence of God's redemptive purpose in the face of pride, error, idolatry, and willfulness. Second, the existence of the Scriptures in which the believing historian sees the freedom of God's powerful love precisely in a book over which men would seem to have complete authority. Third, the apostolic succession in which the continuance of the Church shows to the believing historian the God who is with us and for us in the very "now" of the hopeless situation. Fourth, the analogy of birth and death which underscores for the Christian historian the importance of time for existence and salvation and the teleological character of its procession. In the light of God's Word he sees the connection between world events and the history of salvation. In faith, he expresses his vision of this connection through membership in the Church, participating through Christ as a grafted branch on the tree of Abraham in the free flow of God's omnipotent grace upon world events. In this participation he receives his call to the teaching task and thus to intrepid cognizance of the situation. His transcendence of the situation is secret, his involvement in it is manifest, and for it his apprehensions (and indeed his apprehension!) are just phenomenal.

Here it becomes apparent that there are, operationally at least, two kinds of history for the Christian history teacher—history for the believer and history for

the non-believer. It is this fact that makes historical work so exacting for the Christian teacher, for he must be discreet in his treatment of the subject, depending upon whether he addresses the church or the world. To be sure, in both cases he teaches, not preaches; he takes intrepid cognizance of the situation. But he remembers that the history of the situation can be understood *really* only in faith in Jesus Christ. For the non-believer, it can only be understood *phenomenally*, that is, in terms of itself. So that it would be the compounding of confusion to address the non-believer about history as though he could hear something that he is in fact deaf to. With the non-believer the faithful history teacher is content to treat the phenomena as such, is content indeed with the phenomenality of his own person, learning, and work. He handles the phenomena before the non-believer with fairness, sympathy, and courage. This does not mean that he does not witness to his faith; it merely means that he is not afraid to have his faith and its effects on his work, viewed and handled as they are bound to be, as phenomena. It means rather that he does not argue and seek to convince; he does not present as facts what can be seen only as phenomena. If he becomes anxious, hostile, and biased, he disobeys his commission as a teacher; he becomes an apologist and a natural theologian—indeed, a secret agent of the situation of sin and death. In addressing the believer, on the other hand, he presents the phenomena in the light of faith and has confidence that in this light they will be seen in their reality. Here again there is fairness, sympathy, and courage, and the teacher witnesses to his faith by participating with the learner in the healing illumination of grace.

So long as the Christian teacher of history is in the position of having to follow his calling in secular schools, and in denominational schools that are anxious to compete with them on the same levels for the same rewards, an understanding of these distinctions will be crucial to faithful and obedient teaching. It hardly needs to be added that they are far from being widely understood or acknowledged. Indeed one gets the impression often enough to be seriously alarmed that the very nature and purpose of Christian education itself are hopelessly misunderstood and eccentrically apprehended. Nevertheless, faithful teachers can pray and labor for obedient and trustful speaking and listening, for courageously analytical confrontation of the situation. "Where two or three are gathered together in His name. . . ."

# Specialization and Secularism in Higher Education

JAMES D. BRYDEN



TO EXPOSE THE CONCERN which projected this article, I want to begin with a statement from Karl Heim's *Christian Faith and Natural Science*, as quoted in the Editor's Preface of *The Christian Scholar*, March, 1957:

"The Church is like a ship on whose deck festivities are still kept up and glorious music is heard, while deep below the waterline a leak has been sprung and masses of water are pouring in so that the vessel is settling hourly lower, though the pumps are manned day and night."

This is an extravagant simile! or is it? When we realistically consider the status of religion on the highest educational levels of our culture, we may well wonder.

Another quotation, from the Editor's Preface of *The Christian Scholar*, December, 1955 — Professor Harold J. Berman saying in the Harvard Chapel:

"This morning, before we go to our classes and to our books, as we sit in chapel to praise God and give Him thanks, I raise the question: Is there any connection between the Christian faith which moves us in these devotions and the intellectual activity which is our business as members of this university?"

Professor Berman goes on to sharpen his question and to answer it: "... is there any recognition that God even exists, much less is glorified? Is not the truth, rather, that our intellectual life, our thinking, is divorced from our faith?" This is not the voice of a fretful or discouraged mood; it is a considered statement that the intellectual life of our colleges and universities does not have religion within its purview.

One further quotation from the December, 1955 issue of *The Christian Scholar* — Professor Clarence P. Shedd expressing his concern that campus religious programs do not succeed in attracting more students: "... in no large university are the religious forces making a significant contribution to more than 15% of the student body. Probably 10% is a safer guess." (My own observation in universities I know best leads me to stay that Dr. Shedd's lower estimate is much too high.)

These quotations do not give us the whole perspective, however, for curiously enough, there exists, in spite of this state, or status, of religion on our campuses the fact as stated by Dr. Shedd that on most campuses across the country, "The doors are open for both a positive Christian witness for the reshaping of aims and processes of higher education so that students graduate with sound reason for knowing that faith in God, and devotion to those great ethical conceptions of truth, goodness, beauty, love, justice, and brotherhood, that

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find their deepest rootage in our Judeo-Christian heritage, make sense in our mad, chaotic world." Professor Shedd convincingly describes six of these open doors and says that there are "scores of them."

Putting together the observations of Professors Berman and Shedd, we have divorce of our intellectual life, our thinking, from our faith, and wide disinterest in religion (campus religious programs) on the one hand, and open doors for the penetration by religion of the intellectual life of our colleges and universities on the other. *Why do we not succeed in entering these open doors?* This is our problem. In this article I am putting forward the notion that the reason we do not is because the entrances are blocked by a shadowy adversary which is so much an accepted part of the life and climate and intellectual mores of the university as to be for the most part below our threshold of conscious identification.

What is this adversary? Professor Berman elsewhere in his Harvard Chapel talk identified it as "the secularism of modern scientific thought" which is in conflict with "the Christian insight that man is more than a natural phenomenon." Here is no hackneyed, prejudiced view of higher education in general and science in particular because these insist that ideas should be examined. However, subscribing to Professor Berman's statement, one might be led to say that it amounts to a serious declaration of war against this most influential, currently impressive and certainly most immediately productive element in the life of the modern university — scientific thought. If we are persuaded that this is the case and if we wish to act on our persuasion, we should face up to two facts upon which the effectiveness of any strategy will be contingent:

First, we shall be in the hapless position of being unable to distinguish our antagonist from ourselves, for the reason that scientific thought so involves us that no one may say with certainty where it begins and where it ends. If we say that it begins in the science departments of the universities (or anywhere else), can we be sure that it stops short of us? It is not a thing apart—it is the very form and color of our imagination; it is our eyes—we see our world through it. It lives in us, is enfleshed in us. To be at war with it is to be at war with ourselves.

Second, if we seriously propose to act against scientific thought, we shall have to contrive some way of disentangling ourselves from it in order to do battle against it. And how can we do this? How shall we set up a front and commit ourselves to battle? That can be done, I think, only by perfecting our jargon for dialectical shadow-boxing. Further, taking my cue from those who have attempted to do this, it appears to me that our first tactical move would then be to attempt to discredit historical criticism, thinking to save the Bible, special revelation and the Gospel; then we shall attempt to be consistent with this move, rejecting the world we live in and by; we shall use as our chief weapon a reiteration of dogma, needlessly attempting to endow it with special power by making a pious virtue of irrelevance.

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But scientific thought—more durable even than its products—is here to stay; and the question comes at us with insistent force: are we indeed engaged with scientific thought in a truceless and eternal war, cold, then hot, as we make periodic sorties from the embattled intellectual caves to which we shall have retreated? No! Our quarrel is not with scientific thought as such, but with the *secularism* of modern scientific thought. (This distinction is of the greatest importance, for it saves us from making an enemy of a most faithful servant.) Secularism is separable from the scientific thought which may induce it; it may therefore be isolated and attacked.

But now, what is behind this bad word? What is secularism? If we say that, in this connection, the word is simply a qualifier indicating that scientific thought is "uncontrolled by religion," it would appear—certainly to me—that secularism has ceased to be our adversary, for scientific thought, in this sense, *should* be secular; it should be as uncontrolled by religion as by politics. It should be untrammelled in its exploration of the mysteries of the universe. However, at the same time, if science has this freedom of operation, the scientists who are its servants must bear the responsibility which freedom entails. The question is, are scientists on our university campuses really producing a secularism which is far more than the freedom of science from religious control? Are they producing in their students and in the whole University a secular view of life and the universe, a *Weltanschauung* which deeply involves the motivations and ends of life and which reaches far beyond the particular matters of the sciences and gets itself uncritically assumed in the reaches of life beyond the laboratory and the classroom? As a Christian and a minister, I am interested in *that*. And when someone of the stature of Dr. Berman states as his considered judgment that modern scientific thought is producing among students such a secular view of life, we better examine the merits of that charge.

The question now is, what is the relation between scientific thought and such secularism? Relative to this question, I want to state my own thesis: there is definitely an important and apparently necessary element in the procedure of modern scientific thought which, when allowed to do so, lays down unexamined assumptions in the minds of students, producing an extensive secularism which precludes interest in religion except as a strange and eccentric human phenomenon. *This element is intensive specialization.* Intensive specialization is, I believe, responsible for the structure and effectiveness of much of our current secularism in higher education in that it has the following side-effects:

1. Specialization produces more and more people who are unaware of the broad heritage of Western culture and who lack the wide knowledge and the mental tools for thinking about the complexities and problems of our common life. The "educated ignorance" produced by specialization is, of course, of great concern to educators because of the wealth of our cultural heritage which has dropped



below the shrinking horizon of college graduates. A distinctive element of that heritage is the Christian religion in the extensiveness and depth of its relevance. As this drops out of the purview of educated people we have the rise of secularism.

2. Our concern is justified not simply because specialization, especially in the sciences and technologies where training is increasingly rigorous, means that a student cannot find time to take liberal arts courses; it is justified because of the nature of specialization itself: as specialization demands intensive training in special languages used as tools by the various disciplines, it erects *positive language barriers* which fragment society and make fruitful communication impossible. Education becomes the process of learning to see reality broken apart. We become a society of chemists, physicists, biologists, psychologists, sociologists, business managers, engineers, and technologists, who are not only uneducated beyond the fields of our specializations, but who know no common language by which we can seize upon, consider, and think on an intelligent level about the vitalities, contingencies, and values of life. This poses for us a first-class educational dilemma, for specialization is necessary if we are to have decent scientific scholarship and adequate technological training. Our problem is made more difficult when we realize that *fragmentation of community life, on campuses and reflected extensively in society, varies directly with the efficiency gained in our areas of specialized study and work*. Where communication thus fails in any community, due to the imposition of positive language barriers, religion suffers; its symbols become insignificant; Christian conceptions and the experience of approaching life through the good news, the Gospel, find no passage for circulation in the life-stream of the community; religion for educated people become a thing apart, an eccentric human phenomenon; life is understood only in terms of physical and psychological states and sociological patterns, in terms of sterile "scientific facts," rather than in terms of living meaning. Religious belief and personal religion die, victims of the abstract, symbolic languages of the scientific disciplines.

3. A further side-effect of specialization in the sciences and technologies is a preoccupation with means rather than ends. This is so, I believe, because the preponderance of training in these fields and competence in them is largely in terms of those special technical languages devised mainly for quantitative calculation of procedures with material means. In the absence of an open and broadly educated consideration of ends, the means tend to set up shop as ends in themselves. This is the simplest form of materialism and its cultivation in a large and influential segment of a community is a threat to religion, because religion—especially the Christian religion—is concerned about means only as they are related to and serve a hierarchy of ends not calculable in quantitative terms. In a society dominated by such a materialism, religion itself may succumb to a shallow, subversive pragmatism and become for a time simply a way of getting what we want, a rabbit's foot religion, a fruitless and at last disappointing abridgment of our historic faith.



4. Beyond the fact that intensive specialization in the sciences promotes, as indicated above, an educated ignorance, a breakdown of communication and a fragmentation of community life whereby meanings are lost, and a preoccupation with means rather than ends, it strongly tends to promote an intellectually grounded and progressive intolerance as more refined and useful languages are devised as the tools of subspecializations. Because such languages are increasingly abstract, the possibility diminishes that the specialist may be aware of fields beyond his own; and he becomes increasingly less willing to admit there may be, outside his language field, other disciplined categories of discourse which are intellectually respectable and deal with areas of reality which are important. As some bodies refuse healthily to entertain certain substances, his mind refuses to entertain another language, not simply because he does not understand it, but because he has a sort of intellectual allergy with respect to it. It is not *his* language. One of our problems in introducing religious considerations into the life of a campus is due to the fact that this sort of allergy is readily communicable to young students! Their minds simply close. I recall a conversation I had some years ago with a brilliant young physicist. Long after midnight he said, "Jim, there is no use trying to carry this discussion further. The only reality I know anything about is that which I can measure quantitatively. My mind refuses to entertain any other terms." Some months later, after he had begun to court a girl I knew, he dropped into my office to chat. I remarked that his must be a grim courtship. He lowered his eyebrows and began to bristle. Hastening to say that my remark came from my supposition that he lived as a scientist, I asked, "But how do you confine a courtship to quantitative terms?"

Now, it is interesting to speculate as to why a specialized scientific language should produce such intolerance. It would seem that, because it is pragmatically effective within its own small kingdom, it acquires an aura of authority and tends to promote in the mind of the student the assumption that it is capable of a complete and adequate description of all reality worth serious attention. Thus, the special languages, devised as useful tools, may lead those who use them to assume that they deal with the "most real" and even the "highest good." Observing the operation of this assumption brings to mind the prophecy made by Auguste Comte a hundred years ago that, with the advance of the positive sciences, man would escort God to the edge of the universe and bow Him out with thanks for His provisional services.

The above brief outline of the side-effects of intensive specialization in the sciences indicates, I believe, the intellectual structure of the secularism which Professor Berman relates to scientific thought and which he finds pervading the life of the university. Of course, the degree to which it dominates the thinking of individual professors and students varies from person to person. It is generally hidden and may not be overtly anti-religious; it simply rejects the concerns of religion and frustrates attempts to gain them a place in the life of the university

community: it blocks the entrances of Professor Shedd's open doors—and does so in a very effective and noiseless manner. It has characteristically a naive but highly effective intellectual arrogance—I can think of no better term for it—which looks upon religious concerns and even philosophical questions as mere stuff not worthy the attention of healthy minds. In a college or university where such an attitude has taken root on the most influential levels of the student community, a student who gives attention to religion does so at considerable social hazard. Why? He has surrendered the accepted secular view; he has allowed himself to be persuaded—supposedly by a soft desire for a refuge from “facts”—that there may be something, after all, in this religious business. He has rebelled against the mores of the modern scientific community.

Against this background, and because the elemental questions native to man's mind and the human situation continue to arise—questions about man's nature and destiny, the existence of God and the nature of reality—we see a curious phenomenon. Out of the educated ignorance and its resulting naivete produced by specialization, the specialist finds it surprisingly easy to devise or accept little, spurious answers to large questions, the proper treatment of which lies in a category of discourse beyond the limits of his own discipline. For this reason, we frequently find people on our highest educational level entertaining and promoting opinions about religion which are naive out of all proportion to their intellectual stature. Such treatment of religion, sometimes by its friends, in the climate of criticism permeating the university, further detracts from the intellectual respectability of religion.

What may be done by those who are convinced that religious concerns should have a place in the life of the university, not as an intruding side-interest, but as germane to its life? If there is any measure of truth in what I have indicated above as to the nature of the relation between specialization and secularism, the difficult thing we must try to do is to get at secularism where it arises and may be directly and relevantly dealt with—on the faculty level. One large reason our adversary seems remote and shadowy to those engaged in campus religious programs is that his (I see I have personalized secularism in this pronoun!) base of operations is the classroom. Professor Hallowell, writing in *The Christian Scholar*, says that there—in the classroom—the student “gathers by omission and innuendo that belief in God is not intellectually respectable”.<sup>1</sup> Why should this happen? The business at hand in most classrooms is not religion, but chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology and other areas of study. What have these to do with religion? Directly, nothing. However, all areas of study have around them as a sort of penumbra the pressing immediacy of life, an area of problems and questions to which the mind jumps and in which the empirical method of scientific thought cannot properly grasp nor competently deal with the questions which arise. It is

<sup>1</sup> Volume XXXVIII, No. 4, December, 1955, p. 262.

at just this critical point where the student gets the impact of the teacher's assumptions about, say, the nature of reality and the universe, the nature of man and all the other matters with which religion is concerned. If, at this point, the teacher indicates by his attitude (conveyed effectively by his very look and the inflection of his voice) that he finds here nothing worth serious consideration, the student readily picks up the teacher's assumptions, extends them by inference and closes his own mind. He becomes a naive empiricist and nothing can raise for him again a serious consideration of religion except a forthright retracing of the steps he has taken and a square look at the assumptions he has accepted. Furthermore, *this must be done on a level which he considers to be as intellectually respectable as the classroom where the assumptions were laid down.* Unless we can thus come to grips with our antagonist, it is doubtful whether we should hope to bring religion and the student together. Student religious groups offer some opportunity, but even the best of them do not reach large numbers of students; and when conducted by ministers or university pastors with no official status in the university community, they are very likely to be, in the estimation of the students, only one notch above the bull-session—perhaps not quite a full notch, depending on the orientation of the ministers to the students' thinking, especially in regard to the assumptions which dominate that thinking.

All this does not mean that the college professor must come to think of himself as an "evangelist." In a sense, he should be an evangelist, as all Christians should; but his first responsibility, of course, is to be a capable teacher in his field. However, if he is sensitive to the places where his material—biology, for example—raises questions which are not primarily biological, he has opportunity for evangelism of the most basic sort. He has every right, it would seem to me, as a biologist who is also a person to speak the truth as he sees it. It is not a question of whether or not he *wants* to declare himself before his students; at that point he *must* declare himself. Even if he prefers to back off from the consideration at hand—for example, the nature of man conceived in other than biological terms—*how* he backs off will be significant to his students. They will draw inferences from his attitude. And certainly if he backhands the question as "that old chestnut" and fails to honor it, he has thereby clearly declared himself.

The question now arises as to how this professor, busy in his own field, is to get a decent orientation to the penumbral religious questions which he does not feel justified in attempting to handle. Perhaps he has never thought enough about them to feel he has a right to anything but the vaguest opinions, much less that he is justified in turning these opinions loose in a classroom. I have two suggestions and offer no apology because they are simple and obvious. The first is that he appeal to the best resources in religion on the campus, either inviting a university pastor to his classroom—which may be a considerable risk!—or referring students to the university pastor or pastors. I make this suggestion because I have been amazed in this connection at the number of faculty people who will not seek

resources beyond their own fields, or refer students to a consideration of these resources. I must say, for most university pastors I know, that they are very ready to seek and use resources outside the field of religion. But how many professors refer students to a university pastor? Not many! They refer students to resources in fields which they feel are adjacent to their own—the biologist to the anthropologist and chemist, the chemist to the physicist, the physicist to the mathematician, and so forth. The question here, I suppose, is what fields of academic pursuit may properly be considered as adjacent to one another. I submit that if any study, biology, for instance, raises in the minds of students questions which run into another field and involve students and the professor in another discipline and category of discourse, e.g. religion, that field should be considered adjacent. Though religion may not have an obvious functional interdependence with biology, *these fields are related through the persons involved*. This relationship does not depend either on the academic purposes of these disciplines nor on the functional relatedness of the languages employed by them as tools. I suggest, therefore, that university pastors are ready to be used by members of the teaching staff of the university and that the initiative lies largely with the teacher; it lies with the teacher because he is *inside* the university.

My second suggestion is that it is most important that Christian teachers come together in a Faculty Christian Fellowship, each bringing the resources of his own training and experience for the enrichment of the group. The least that a professor should find in such a group, if it has a program into which he can sink his mental teeth, is a means of orienting himself in relevant and useful language to the religious questions which rise just beyond the area of his own field. I recall vividly the embarrassment of a professor who consented to speak to a student group on a subject which on the surface seemed to him quite within his own area; during the discussion which followed his talk, he became hopelessly lost and confused in the rather simple maze of the students' questions. One observant lad said to me after the session: "The old boy really took a beating, didn't he!" The professor said: "Never again!" It seems to me that an active relation with the Faculty Christian Fellowship on the campus should be viewed by the teacher not merely as a way of showing that his heart is in the right place, but as a means of becoming a good teacher at that blurred point where his own field and religion meet in the intellectual and spiritual adventure of his students. In becoming competent at this point, the teacher may make good his opportunity of easily reaching people the university pastor may reach, at best, only a considerable period of time, if at all. These are students and other teachers who never bother about organized religion but nevertheless do ask on occasion important questions which are within the area of religious thought. Many of these people are intellectually and spiritually lonely, not because of personality factors within themselves which shut them in, but because there is in the university community too little of a common life which runs across departmental boundaries and offers the individual a way out of the

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tightening downward spiral of preoccupation with his own speciality. I suggest here, in connection with the main matter of this article, that the Christian university teacher may help make available a useful common language—that of the Christian religion—which can be used as a bridge between departments of the university's fragmented scholarship.

Finally, what practical import may all this have for the university pastor? In the first place, I think we should no longer be deluded by the notion that we may succeed in our main business by using clever advertising and adding further "deck festivities" to our programs in order to buck other campus activities as our rivals for student interest. (And I am *not* saying that we don't have to advertise!) It is common sense observation, but a misleading one, to say that the student has very little time for us because he is up to his neck in other activities. These other interests are not actually our competitors any more than the competitors of the corner grocery store are the movie theaters across the street. There are some cases, to be sure, of students who say they have to choose whether to take on major responsibilities in a religious organization or in some other campus activity; but this is not the case with most students—they simply gravitate to those activities which interest them most. And religion, as represented by campus religious organizations and participation measured by the draw of our programs, does not interest them in large numbers. Why it does not becomes more of a puzzle when we realize that students continue to ask the large, elemental questions with which religion deals. These questions seem to be native to the human mind and situation, for students—all of them philosophers under the skin—discuss them in spontaneous bull sessions, though they will not avail themselves of the resources of university pastors and the religious programs offered on the campus. Secularism, of the sort we are primarily concerned with, is deeper than a superficial and erratic play of interests; let us therefore not delude ourselves with the notion that in sparring with other campus activities in a contest for student recognition we are coming to grips with it.

In the second place, the university pastor should realize that he cannot exorcise secularism any more than he can scientific thought by "religious incantations." He must prepare himself in terms of the secularist point of view—its half-baked notions about religion and the reach of science and its simple dogma and bluffs about the nature of man and reality—he must prepare himself to meet these in their own terms and on their own ground. A "simple declaration" of the good news, the Gospel, is not enough, for the reason that the secularist thinks he has heard very good news already. He, with the man on the street, never had it so good! This he proclaims—and, in a limited sense, within the perspective of his own felt needs, he is correct. But he does have moments when he is not at all sure, when life as he has known it loses form, becomes fluid again; when he, as a person, asks questions which he as a scientist, or budding scientist, cannot even begin to answer; when he as a person has need for a community of other persons who



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know they need and want more than things. *Then*, the university pastor has his chance.

This brings me to the third suggestion. The university pastor must contrive to bring about an *engagement* with the intellectual life of the university. And the fact is—we may as well face it—he cannot do this on his own. Over a long period of time he may come to know some students intimately; but students quickly come and go (and he may know them without ever really meeting their minds). Further, by study he may equip himself for association with faculty people in terms of their interests; *but unless the university itself makes room for the university pastor*, it is doubtful if he can contrive an engagement with its life which will be in any large way successful in stopping the leak below the waterline which, to use Karl Heim's figure of speech, is sinking the ship.

To talk of the church as a sinking ship sounds like nonsense until we give hard-headed attention to the fact that it is difficult to find serious consideration of religion on the highest educational levels of our culture. Let us here recall that we have dramatized ourselves as engaged in a battle for the mind of man. This is theoretical nonsense unless we can get an antagonist fairly within our sights! But if we see clearly the insidious tactics of intellectual secularism in the side-effects of specialization, we not only have spotted our enemy; we have exposed his *modus operandi*—and that is the first step in our strategy against him.

## Books and Publications

### *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation.*

By E. Harris Harbison. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956, xi, 177 pages. \$3.00.

The relating of faith to learning has been an important concern historically for those who are by vocation both Christians and scholars, a concern which has nowhere been more significant than in the Reformation era. Specialists have long been aware of the important relations between the revival of learning and the reform of the church. E. Harris Harbison, the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History at Princeton University, has now, by a judicious and creative survey of the field, brought forth an urbane and readable treatment of the Christian scholar and his vocation in the age of the Reformation. The work will be authoritative for specialists in the period treated and richly suggestive for the larger body of Christian intellectuals who, in our own age, seek to relate commitment and learning, faith and thought. Many of the perennial concerns of Christian scholarship are developed here with a clarity and existential cogency which I have found in no other study.

#### I

The opening chapters set the background against which Mr. Harbison treats the figures whom he has chosen for his particular concern—Erasmus, Luther and Calvin. The first chapter treats four eminent and representative scholars from the patristic and scholastic periods. Others might have been selected, as Mr. Harbison says, but in Jerome, Augustine, Abelard and Aquinas he presents us with important types which will recur in varied but repeated forms. Basically, Jerome was concerned with the critical appraisal and preservation of the Christian Scriptures; he was a scholar who sought to satisfy his tremendous thirst for study by applying himself to sacred rather than secular documents but whose inclinations were not for the sweeping theological or philosophical view which appealed to the more catholic mind of Augustine. Augustine made of the formula, "unless you believe, you will not come to know," the foundation stone for a Christian structure of thought which is still both impressive and productive. Although he regarded learning along with all other human enterprise as incapable of saving man, he wanted most of all "to grasp the truth, not by belief alone but also by the understanding." Jerome was suspicious of human learning, and sought spiritual safety in concentration upon a sacred scholarship to which he applied his great abilities in the monumental task of developing the Vulgate. Augustine was suspicious of all human endeavor, for even the most safely religious could be contaminated by human pride, but he boldly set himself to the universal concerns of the life of the mind under the grace of God.

Jerome and Augustine, in Mr. Harbison's words, "are the main archetypes of the Christian scholar, if archetypes there are." Two other archetypes, different

in some ways from these, are found in the later Middle Ages. Abelard was the raiser of questions, the propounder of problems, a sort of Socratic gadfly commissioned by God to stir Christendom from apathy to doubt and from inquiry to truth. Among the four early scholars, his life was the least edifying, morally considered, but his stimulus was great and his influence important. Finally, there was the great Aquinas, "the saintliest of the learned, and the most learned of the saints," whose synthesis of Aristotle and Christianity was founded both on learning and on prayer.

The second chapter, devoted to the renaissance background, presents the representative figures of Petrarch, Lorenzo Valla, Pico della Mirandola and John Colet. With apposite selectivity Mr. Harbison brings before us the new patterns and problems which emerge as the primacy held in the medieval period by dialectic and theology is shifted to literary and historical concerns. In Petrarch we see one of the perennial problems of scholarship, the "overcrowded mind" with "no considered plan," while Valla demonstrates the values of "pure" as well as applied scholarship. It is only in Colet, however, that we find so complete an interpenetration of piety and of professional purpose that the scholar in him always recalled the Christian and the Christian the scholar.

## II

Approximately one-third of the book is devoted to these earlier figures, so that the primary concern with Christian scholars of the Reformation era is placed in a perspective which is both instructive in itself and necessary for what follows. The first of the major figures is Erasmus, a prince among humanists who to the end refused to follow his followers into the Protestant camp. A conscious disciple of Jerome, Erasmus' passion for the literary text and its explication and his insatiable appetite for learning outweighed the concern for philosophic or theological synthesis. Nonetheless, he could with considerable justice claim to have "brought it about that Humanism, which . . . savored of nothing but pure paganism, began nobly to celebrate Christ." While Colet had evidenced a reluctance to publish, Erasmus felt compelled to serve as "Professor-at-large to Christendom." With "a supreme disregard for learning of a trivial kind," he acted on the principle that he would rather, as he put it, "wait long for a solid reputation than acquire at an early age one not likely to last." For him, learning was life, and all time lost that was not devoted to study. He reclaimed humane studies for Christianity, and like a Moses led younger men to the borders of a new land which he himself would not enter.

Luther's conversion, and his discovery of the key of faith, was the immediate result of his scholarly concern in preparing lectures at the University of Wittenberg. The root of the matter, of course, went deeper, for he searched out his theology "where my temptations carried me." Not primarily or by choice a scholar, as were Erasmus and Calvin, Luther nonetheless was a man of wide erudition and learned stature. It was his doctorate which gave him both sanction and oppor-

tunity for promoting the Reformation, and in the earliest stages of his protest he was regarded, rather shortsightedly, as only "another Erasmian." "The truest way, then," Mr. Harbison writes, "to describe the beginning of the Reformation is to say that it originated in a *scholar's insight*, born equally of spiritual struggle and hard intellectual labor." Whereas Pope Leo X thought the whole indulgence controversy a monk's quarrel, it would perhaps have been more accurate to describe it as an academic row, "a scandal in a university."

The later leadership of Protestantism devolved upon a man whose primary tastes and choice were for a life of scholarship. In John Calvin we find reflected "almost every facet of scholarship as a Christian calling which we have seen personified in earlier figures." Like Jerome and Erasmus, he came out of a background of deep humanistic discipline, a discipline which he meticulously applied to sacred studies, while like Augustine and Luther he too came as one called by a strong sense of conversion. Joining the critical and historical approach of Erasmus with the theological emphasis of Luther, he performed somewhat the same function of systematizing and synthesizing as Aquinas had discharged three centuries earlier. In sum, it is quite clear that Calvin's active and practical role as organizer and church statesman was thrust upon him, while his real preference was to live the life of a scholar. Nonetheless, despite the heavy strain of his "administrative" and pastoral duties in Geneva, he was remarkably able to continue a production so prolific that forty-nine volumes are now in print and others are in the process of editing from manuscript. The characteristic marks of his Christian scholarship were the genius for systematizing, a balance between the subjective and objective, and a passion for utility, for the applicability of intellectual endeavor to the issues of existence. Aware of a double obligation, Calvin effectively addressed both the ordinary reader and the intellectual.

In his conclusion, Mr. Harbison points to the fact that "religion without learning, or learning without religion . . . must ultimately prove injurious to the Church." Protestants, as heirs of "a movement originated by scholars and intellectuals," should be especially concerned with scholarship as "a legitimate calling of high significance." In our own time, "the danger of final separation between sacred and secular learning can only be avoided if more men and women in both seminaries and universities acquire the vision of scholarship as a calling worthy of a Christian, and of Christianity as a commitment worthy of a scholar."

### III

If a book is good, a review cannot do it justice, and Mr. Harbison's is an exceptionally fine piece of work. Despite the modesty of his claims, he has provided Renaissance and Reformation scholars with an invaluable guide to a centrally relevant aspect of their field. The work is characterized by accuracy of knowledge, penetrating insights and balanced judgments. The scholars and times treated come alive, to paraphrase Hamlet, in their habits as they lived. I have discovered only one

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debatable point, not really an error, but an overstatement of the assurance that Calvin was never ordained, a point which John T. McNeill and others would be disposed at least to qualify. But this is a minor matter.

For the non-specialist the book will make exciting reading, and the treatment of its central theme will place it high on the reading list of all academic people who are concerned with the relationship of Christian faith and academic vocation. The study thus contributes both to specialists and to the general company of Christian intellectuals.

Like much good scholarship, it has not only met an old need but has also created a new one—the need for a study of the Christian scholar and his vocation *since* the Reformation. The nature of Mr. Harbison's subject compels him to treat men whose scholarship primarily operated upon specifically Christian materials, while since the Reformation most Christian scholars have been primarily engaged in the so-called "secular" disciplines. Over the horizon from Calvin is Milton, and beyond him are Locke, Newton, Johnson, Coleridge and others down to our own time whose problems are different in many important ways from those of Jerome and Augustine, Erasmus, Luther and Calvin. Here is a clear need for further research. It is to be hoped that Mr. Harbison will continue his study of the Christian scholar and will give us a second book on his place in the post-Reformation world. He has already placed us deeply in his debt by a skilled portrayal of certain basic ingredients of Christian scholarship and certain major forms of its expression in the life and thought of men.

ROLAND MUSHAT FRYE

*Reason and Life: The Introduction to Philosophy.* By Julián Marías Aquilera, trans. by Kenneth S. Reid and Edward Sarmiento. Yale University Press, 1956. xiii, 413 pages. \$5.00.

Spanish philosophy in the twentieth century has for a long while been identified in most American readers' minds with the work of Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset. Undoubtedly these two men have conferred a brilliance and a distinction upon modern Spanish thought which entitles them to their high place of honor. But there have been other Spanish philosophers too, whose writings, although virtually unknown in this country because not translated, have been quietly and steadily making an impact upon widening groups of readers in Spain and Latin America. The most notable of them—Xavier Zubiri, Manuel García Moriente, and Julián Marías—have come to philosophical maturity under the humanizing influence of Ortega and his editorship of the *Revista de Occidente* and whatever their differences of doctrine and strategy they never forget the Maestro's stress upon "vital reason" (*la razón vital*) as the pivot of all philosophy that is honestly oriented and relevantly perceptive. Julián Marías is the most important



#### BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

surviving member of this group, having published five books in the last three years alone; and his *Introducción a la Filosofía*, published in Madrid in 1947, offers (although not as simply as its Spanish title might seem to indicate) the best introduction to the main principles and methods by which his thought is guided. The present translation of this work, made by Kenneth S. Reid of the University of Durham and Edward Sarmiento of the University College at Cardiff, is evidently a labor of love; for the problem of translating Marías' careful discriminations and shadings of meaning from Spanish into English, where two abstract words so often look alike without connoting alike, must have been an exacting one, and the translators' solutions of such difficulties, while perhaps varying in degree of success, are never perfunctory or wasteful. Moreover, since a literal translation of the title would have been misleading to textbook-conscious American readers, the translators have done well to make a new title out of the two words, *reason* and *life*; for the special way in which these two elements are existentially conjoined supplies the pivotal question that motivates the book's main discussion.

Two basic principles underlie Marías' general argument, which for brevity I may call the principle of radical mobility and the principle of interpenetration. If I distinguish them it is only for the purpose of clearer analysis; in the actual course of the book's argument they are more often presented in combination, as mutually involving each other, and the central concepts (taken over from Ortega) of *vital reason* and *historical reason* involve them both. Marías' plainest statement of the first of the two principles, that of radical mobility, is given on page 28:

"Man is moving within a situation which is also moving; and in such a way that both of them have being only in and by reason of this constitutive mobility."

This strongly Heraclitan motif reappears, in a later context, as a declaration that my life is not ready-made *even as a possibility*, "because I have to make or create my own possibilities into the bargain" (p. 208). The other main principle, that of interpenetration, has affinity with the teaching of another pre-Socratic philosopher, as Marías himself indicates:

"As in the world of Anaxagoras, in life 'in everything there is something of everything else'; but the decisive factor, for us as for him, is the *perspective*, the functional articulation of the elements" (p. 21).

The two halves of this latter quotation require separate attention.

Since all things interpenetrate, this must be also true, and indeed perhaps preëminently true, of that inextinguishable center of all existence and all inquiry—the *I*. What is it to be an *I*? The pure Cartesian "I am" has no place in Marías' philosophy; it is a product of intellectual abstraction rather than a genuine starting-point of thought. The awareness from which every philosophy actually sets out is "I-and-my-circumstance" or, more specifically, "I-and-my-situation." *Cir-*

*cumstance* is the broader of these two abstractable terms, and means "everything which I find or may find in my surroundings" (p. 29), or "all that I encounter in my vital horizon" (p. 211); whereas *situation* comprises those elements of circumstances "the variation of which defines each phase of history and which *situate* us at a certain historical level" (p. 30). (The translation here says "defined," but it is either a mistranslation or, more likely, a misprint.)

There are two essential modes of relation to one's circumstance: "being in the world" (*estar en el mundo*) and "living with others" (*conviver*). Neither of them is reducible to the other; they are logically independent but vitally inseparable ways of encountering reality (defined, by a necessary tautology, as "that which I encounter and as I encounter it," p. 206), and of living my *life* (defined as "what I do and what happens to me," p. 207).

Marías' idea of perspective, or of the functional articulation of the elements of a situation, gives the clue to his conception of reason. By an accident of Spanish idiom, untranslatable into English, *dar razón* (literally, "give reason") means "give an account," in the general sense of making one's perspective articulate. "*Razón*" in this idiomatic sense is indicative of how reason, when it is vital and historical, actually operates. Every vital act, even when it is not accompanied by any overt thinking, is an interpretation.

"When I eat an apple, this act interprets it as a food, leaving in obscurity all its other possible beings—a seed, a physical body, a weight, a projectile—which could be actualized only by other acts, equally interpretative" (p. 186).

An important consequence follows:

"*To live* is already *to understand*; the primary and radical form of understanding is the vital doing of man; and all the higher and more complex forms of understanding are expedients to which he has resource when he cannot 'do' at the moment, because he does not know what to hold by (*atenerse*); that is when for want of an interpretation he has to suspend action" (p. 187).

This last clause sounds at first impact as if it might be heading for the radically instrumentalist view, that thinking only arises when action is frustrated or is in doubt. I should say, however, that Marías' line of reasoning is instrumentalism in reverse. The two philosophies, the instrumentalist and the existentialist, agree in holding that explicit operations of reasoning have a vital basis—that is, that they grow out of concrete situations which require them and give them relevance. But Marías draws an inference from this conception which instrumentalists of the Dewey school would dismiss as an unwarranted extravagance: namely, that

"life is *intelligible*, that is, the knowing of itself belongs intrinsically to it; and this self-knowing is a mode of *presence* which is revealed in selfhood" (p. 187).

Two distinctive consequences follow from Marías' argument — the one stylistic, the other religious. Style is necessary to a philosophy not as a superadded adornment but as part and parcel of its very being. For life is, whatever else, an

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organic affair; hence, the vital reason which gives an account (*da razón*) of it is at the same time a historical reason, and finds its utterance, in part at least, through narrative. Three stylistic characteristics—"in an unexpectedly serious sense of the term"—of historical and vital reason here present themselves. (1) Every problem, and every subject matter, must be seen in a multiplicity of perspectives—not as imposed from without, but as demanded by the inherent moving structure of what is to be uttered. The novel, at its best, is a literary form peculiarly well fitted for expressing the dual characteristic of perspectival multiplicity and historical ongoingness: Mariás cites *Don Quixote* and the novels of Unamuno in illustration, but I should think that *War and Peace*, *The Brothers Karamazoff*, *The Wings of the Dove*, *A la recherche d'un temps perdu*, *The Magic Mountain*, *The Castle*, and *Ulysses* would supply even firmer examples, and that a consideration of them might have enriched the texture of the discussion. (2) The descriptive elements employed by the novel are properly functional, and therefore the resources on which they draw must be handled with delicate attention to nuance, cadence, and tone. (3) Metaphor occupies an important place in the serious novel, and it should be employed functionally: that is to say, not as a way of alluding indirectly to already given objects, but as

"an interpretation of them, a placing of them in a particular foreshortening in order to make meanings—in themselves universal and unvarying—take on a precise circumstantial value" (p. 196).

As for the religious bearings of the philosophy espoused—particularly the problems of the reality of God and the survival of the self after death—Mariás (in reality a devout Catholic Christian) disclaims any intention of providing solutions or even of treating such ideas adequately as problems; he is concerned here "only to discover them in their nascent state, at the point at which, charged with problemativeness, they break into human life" (p. 370). For these ideas have to do with *latent* realities, which "are not given to us," and yet which have a *certain mode* of not being given, a mode of "not being there," whereby they seem to border or fringe my life, and "thus oblige me to consider it in an integral fashion."

To reflect on the problem of survival at once existentially and integrally requires us to give equal acknowledgment to two complementary truths. On the one hand, the concrete reality which each of us designates by the pronoun "I" is not a body, and is not a psyche, but is rather a "who?"—an intention, a someone who finds himself having a body, a psyche, and a world.

"This means that, at the most, the death or extinction of the person would be *consequent* upon biological death, but the two would by no means be one and the same thing; and so the assumed annihilation of the man who dies is an inference, an interpretation or theory," in which the burden of proof "does not fall exclusively on the person who affirms immortality," but also—perhaps even more—on the person who denies it, that is, on the person who affirms the hazardous theory that the biological death of an organism must necessarily be accompanied by the destruction of the 'someone' to whom that organism belonged" (p. 378).

Nevertheless, on the other hand, if survival in any meaningful sense occurs, the "I" that survives cannot be pure intentionality, which is an abstraction; existence must have, then as now and there as here, the concrete character of "I-and-my-circumstance," although the circumstance would presumably have undergone an alteration of an extremely radical kind. Philosophy must halt here at the portals of significant possibility; it cannot do more than establish the structure and meaningful validity of the question.

Mariás offers an all too brief five-page discussion of God's existence, by way of an analysis of transcendence as an inevitable characteristic of the radical reality that is human life. In particular, five different modes of transcendence are designated. There is transcendence as circumstantiality, i.e., the intentional character of human life that makes me refer at every moment to an independent world which surrounds me; as factual latency, i.e., my recognition of what in fact is absent from the horizon of my life at a given moment—e.g., the other side of this wall, the South Pole, etc.; as temporal inactuality, which is to say, future possibility; as the otherness of personhood, represented by the *alter egos* who transcend my life "in a different and more radical manner" than is the case with things; and finally, transcendence as the absolute. In an essay, "The Problem of God in the Philosophy of Our Time," published in Spanish in *San Anselmo y el Insensato*, Mariás had approached the problem of God along recognizably Anselmian lines. After quoting in the present volume a passage from that earlier argument, he proceeds to examine the matter with a new, and more existentialist emphasis. His question now takes the form: *Why is the problem of God a problem?* Since no one of us can be sure of finding God present to him, but at most only the idea of God, and since "normally, the fact that an idea comes into my mind does not necessarily lead me . . . to make a problem of the reality to which that idea refers"; what is it that makes the presence of the idea of God "create an atmosphere of problemativeness and oblige me to take up a position with regard to the reality to which it alludes but which is in no way present to me?" Mariás' reply is that:

"God is the name of a radical interpretation of reality," and that "accordingly, as soon as his name is pronounced 'not in vain', as soon as the *idea* of God comes into our lives, the problem of the reality of God inexorably appears, and with it the problem of reality itself" (p. 390).

For when the idea of God actually springs up in our lives (the Spanish "*surge*" is stronger than the translators' "comes"), which is to say, when the idea of God is "discovered and experienced in a religious manner" and not merely entertained as a metaphysical possibility, this means that I find myself facing existentially the challenge of whether or not to believe in a radical reality which "consists essentially in the utter transcendence of [the reality which is my life] and is, in short, its foundation" (p. 392). From a strictly logical point of view it might be remarked that the answer is virtually no more than a restatement of the question; but from Mariás' standpoint (and incidentally from my own) this would not constitute a crippling objection, for when a question is existentially unavoidable—i.e., when

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it is "something of which I have to give an account (*dar razón*) in order to go on living"—then such a question and its fully relevant answer are not sharply divided, but are two phases—separated perhaps by the psychic actualities of doubt, agony, and choice—of the same existential process of discovering what, in the most radical sense, a human person finds that he can and must "hold by" (*atenerse*).

PHILIP WHEELWRIGHT

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# Reports and Notices

## A GROUP EXPERIMENT IN GROWTH



ERE BEGINNETH A TRUE STORY of plans and no-plans, order and disorder, Providence and accidents, certainty and mystery. The tale concerns the odyssey of several individual faculty professors at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, who formed a group for certain reasons, and what happened as a result. And it all began something like this:

There was a professor of government who was more or less oriented intellectually to the scientific view of the study of Political Science. He took the label seriously. Personality wise, however, he was much more prone to stating his convictions and predictions with both vigor and challenge, fully aware that such pronouncements were not the result of laboratory tests. His official work was careful, scholarly and reserved. His unofficial extra-classroom attitudes were human. One year, this man was invited to teach at another school noted for its political science department. In his year at this other university, he discovered that most of his colleagues were also devoted to the scientific study of government and politics. But he also noted how radically each differed in various conclusions about the same phenomenon. This diversity raised the problem of whether each person was truly scientific in his analysis. The Wesleyan professor decided that it was time to have a rigorous look at his own assumptions. It would have been too easy to conclude that everyone else is unscientific while he alone was truly objective. In the course of his own self-examination, he concluded that he was operating from some unacknowledged value assumptions. He also began to detect similar value-judgments or deep philosophical assumptions in the work and thought of fellow professors. Further, he also discovered that people in politics also act from some set or conglomeration of values. Therefore, it appeared to him that one could not divorce philosophical and value assumptions from the study of politics. How such values were related, and what difference they made, he was not sure. But such a concern became a very pressing one. He thus returned to Wesleyan resolved to look into this problem.

Another government professor, of more tender years, had already reached a similar conclusion, partly because of his family background, and partly because of his first-hand experiences with congressmen in Washington. This young professor had many concrete examples to show how decisions made by congressmen were greatly affected and often largely determined by their value loyalty. For this professor, it was a relevant political question to ask, "*which* values?"—and which kind make what kind of difference for good or ill?

The third, fourth and fifth members of the group were three history professors nursed in the great liberal humanist tradition. The violence, fury and complexity of contemporary history had shaken somewhat their earlier optimistic and rationalistic method of interpreting and analyzing history. However, since

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they were true liberals, they were not going to abandon one view for some pat view in order to make themselves rest easy. But they were quite ready to search and to look and to listen.

Two other members of the group were economists who, in the course of their experience, had become uneasy with the old economic dogma that the economist is not concerned with the goals of society, but only with the means. They were concerned with social values and saw that both ends and means mutually influence each other. Therefore, values were relevant to economics, indeed, were a part of it, but how? This they sought to answer.

The eighth and ninth members of the group were one man from the same government department and another from the same history department. The government professor was a specialist in urban politics and planning, and was an empiricist. The history professor was a brilliant and rigorous liberal humanist. Both were as much interested in value questions as anyone else, but both sought to establish values on a strictly empirical or other humanistic basis. These two men were particularly welcomed because there were several other members of the group from the religion department, and they, naturally, were oriented in Christian theology.

In addition to these two humanists and two men from the religion department noted above, there were two men from psychology and two from philosophy. Still more, another member was a distinguished professor of continental background who had an extraordinarily broad and deep training in sociology, history, government and philosophy. Lastly, from time to time, three or four other faculty men would participate in the group discussions.

Prior to the formation of the group was the stimulus and encouragement given by the President of the University, Victor L. Butterfield. One of his main educational policies was the attempt to break down department nationalism and to introduce some measures of either integration or interrelation between academic disciplines. While some curricular devices such as interdepartmental seminars and Humanities courses were helpful, the heart of the emphasis is the informal exchange between professors. In a small college, this was perhaps more possible than in a large university. And, of course, it required the assent and shared conviction of individual faculty members. Such was the case, and the appearance of the naturalist in the class on Christian Doctrine, or the lectures of the political scientist in the economics seminar, or the ethics professor discussing the problem of values in politics was not uncommon. From the background policy, the President was quick to encourage the formation of this group of faculty who now proposed to devote some rigorous study, discussion and considerable time to inquire into the problem of the relation, if any, of Christian theology to their respective disciplines. Accordingly, at the President's request, the university underwrote the expenses of a visiting leader, library books, meals and part-time release from courses.

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The faculty group of some twenty members from the following departments was formed: Government, History, Economics, Philosophy, Psychology, and Religion. The leader of what was now called the Faculty Seminar was Prof. Kenneth Underwood of Yale Divinity School. He was a man trained in professional and technical economics as well as a trained theologian. His field of interest at Yale was Social Ethics. The Seminar was conducted in the following manner: On the first Wednesday of each month from September through June, the group would meet at 2 P.M. Professor Underwood would lecture for forty minutes; this would be followed by forty minutes of discussion. Then a ten minute coffee break. A forty minute lecture would ensue, followed by forty minutes of discussion, another coffee break, then talk and discussion. The group would then go together to a nearby restaurant for dinner. After the meal, the same process would be repeated until officially 10 P.M. Between the monthly meetings each member was expected to read two books from a suggested reading list.

Easily the most remarkable part of this seminar was the nature of the discussion. In the first place, there was a wide diversity of viewpoints, biases, and professional training. In the second place and most important, the discussion was frank, sincere and open. There was a complete absence of defensiveness, of fearful sparring, of egoistic wall-building. Each member felt free to lay bare his assumptions and biases and expected them to be frankly and sometimes bluntly criticized. There was a remarkable degree of genuine give and take. Discussions were recorded on tape so that Prof. Underwood could play back later on and gauge his next lectures accordingly. Great tribute should be paid to Prof. Underwood for his extremely sensitive and responsive leadership as well as his provocative and relevant lectures.

And so the seminar was held for one full academic year. Now the question is, of course, the results. As in any experiment, there are both tangible and intangible effects. Clearly we cannot adequately describe the intangibles. The most we can do is to report the tangible results. For example, one professor in June when asked what he was going to do that summer replied, "I am going to re-examine my assumptions and that means I'll probably have to re-write a lot of my course lectures." Another was now thoroughly convinced that the chief problem in politics is ethical. Today his basic theme is: "Politics is ethics in action." This is followed by the query, "What are your ethics, how are they grounded, and how are they relevant or not to political analysis and decisions?" These are a sample of individual personal reactions. But these samples should not be pictured as indicative of the whole group. Many did not change their basic viewpoint; others perhaps changed a minor understanding, still others changed nothing. But the purpose was not to convert anyone anyway; it was only to share and to seek. And we did not press for personal testimonies of change or no change.

The more obvious and objective tangible results were three in number. First, while the planning for the Public Affairs Program at Wesleyan had already begun, the seminar provided a further impetus. Partly as a result of their own thinking

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and partly as an additional stimulus from the Faculty Seminar, the President and several key faculty members conceived the idea of the program. The central idea of this program was the training of responsible public leaders. It was felt that while there were several excellent schools which offered good technical training for politics and government service, Wesleyan had a unique chance to offer not only competent technical training, but in addition, to prepare students for morally responsible leadership. Therefore, the Public Affairs program would stress necessary technical knowledge, but would also add considerations of values, ethics, and basic theological and philosophical assumptions.

With this goal in mind, the President, some trustees, especially Mr. George Davison, and concerned faculty approached foundations and shortly received a gift of \$455,000 from the Surdna Foundation. This amount, plus some additional funds from the college, produced a public affairs building adjacent to the college library, and complete with its own classrooms, lecture halls, workshop and seminar rooms, special library, faculty offices and lounges. A Carnegie Corporation grant financed the appointment of a program of ethics and public policy, and the establishment of an interdepartmental seminar in "Decision Making in Public Affairs." A curriculum, meshed in with relevant department majors was devised. Prof. Underwood was enticed to leave Yale to accept this position and to become a permanent member of the Public Affairs Center program.

The second result of the seminar was the writing of a book on the relationship of Christian theology to contemporary economics and politics. A tentative title or subtitle is "The Politics of Abundance." The National Council of Churches of Christ in America has chosen this book to become Volume IX in its series on Christianity and Economic Life. It is being written by Prof. Underwood in conjunction with eight members of the Faculty Seminar.

The third result of the seminar is a series of continuing discussions and various research projects by and among most of the original seminar members but also including some new faculty additions. For example, an organized series of discussions have been held with groups of politicians, economists, church leaders and business executives. The purpose of these meetings has been to explore the problem of the relation, if any, between various religious or ethical commitments and policy decisions in these diverse but related vocations. We want to know the type of decisions men have to face and to make. We want to find out how such decisions are made, their complexity, their conscious and unconscious assumptions, values, conditions, etc. Tentative future plans are being considered for the possible establishment of a Summer Institute of Ethics and Politics and/or Ethics and Business. Since the present weekend discussions are proving exciting, it is hoped that perhaps a Summer Institute might afford a two or four week period in which participants might have a better chance to really dig into their respective problems and share deeper concerns. To have living and studying together, business men, poli-

ticians, labor leaders, social scientists, historians, and theologians, seems a real creative possibility.

These, then, are three major tangible results of the Wesleyan Faculty Seminar. For each individual member who participated in it, there were many more personal and private intangible effects. It would be inappropriate to attempt to recite such results. Our point in describing this seminar has been to indicate our belief that the experiment was an exceedingly valuable one. Aside from the three obvious effects, perhaps the most important effect was the fact that a group of diverse faculty from varying disciplines met in a common concern and were able to really talk to each other, criticize and study and grow together not in unanimity of viewpoint, but in mutually creative work.

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## COMMUNITY AND RESEARCH IN THE FACULTY MOVEMENT

### A PROGRESS REPORT

Why a movement of Christian teachers should exist at all is not a question with an answer that is immediately obvious. Overly organized and already pressed with a variety of obligations, the college teacher does not often look with favor on still another organization unless its function and its value are apparent to him.

Two choices have been before the Faculty Christian Fellowship in its brief history: it could define itself as a movement and concentrate on bringing together the concerned people who would then evolve their purpose and their work; it could define itself in terms of a particular job to be done and concentrate on bringing together those able and willing to do the job.

Each approach has real dangers. The first tends to the indefinite and the indecisive. Discussions are too often general, and agreement on abstract princi-

ples rarely leads to concrete action. It perhaps appeals to a larger number but tends to repel the few whose achievements enable them to be more specific and concrete.

The other tends by its very concreteness to repel those who do not agree with the definition of the job. It could tend, also, to confine the work to the few whose experience and training qualify them for the particular work.

Obviously this is a dilemma that can be resolved only in synthesis. To be Christian, a work proceeds from the community. But the community cannot be created without the work, for community is a product of work on a common task. This gives a certain priority, in the thinking of the FCF, to the research.

In pursuing this end the national office has been seeking to establish small committees of qualified scholars to work intensively and continuously on the



problem of the relation of Christianity to their discipline. Out of this should come ultimately some real working hypothesis concerning the relation of Christianity to the intellectual life and consequently to the university as a whole.

Preliminary meetings of two research committees were held during December. The sociology committee met Saturday and Sunday, December 8 and 9, 1956, in Chicago. The history committee had a shorter and therefore more tentative session during the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, December 28 in St. Louis.

Clearly, two different problems faced these groups, and this reflected itself in the conclusions. There is a considerable body of published material on the subject of the relation between Christianity and history. There is virtually nothing on the subject of Christianity and sociology. This made it possible for the sociologists to face a completely open field. The historians, recognizing that no final word has been spoken, had to ask whether more theoretical discussion could be done at the present time or whether the present need is not individual research in light of principles currently attained.

The sociologists formulated their purpose as a committee as follows: "to undertake a thorough critical examination of basic sociological theory in the light of the Christian faith."

Mr. Howard Becker, University of Wisconsin, summed up the conclusions of the group on its procedure when he wrote later: "Eventually the results of these discussions should be made avail-

able to a substantial body of sociologists, and this can be done only by bringing out a book. The issues are of such tremendous importance that they should be dealt with at length and with all the critical skill possible, and they are so intertwined that scattered publication—an article here and there—would be self-defeating."

To this end the group determined that it would next proceed to the job of identifying the basic issues and deciding the division of labor.

The discussions ranged over a wide variety of topics relevant to the basic issue. A constantly recurring theme was the function of the doctrine of man in sociological theory. An implicit doctrine of man underlies all sociological theory, and the work of the group needs to be directed both at the definition of the nature of the self as an object of sociological studies and also at the consequences of the doctrine of the self in the work of the sociologist.

In view of the work already done, the historians were less clear about their next step. Each person present was well aware that the work of the historian depends on fundamental assumptions. Yet each person was intensely aware of the degree to which the historian's work is rooted in the particular.

They tended, therefore, to avoid formulations like "the meaning of the historical process" which tend to impose patterns on fact in favor of a concern with a different choice of subject matter and a different approach to the chosen subject that a Christian might make.

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The group seemed to agree on certain principles: that Christianity provides the firmest theoretical justification for openness and receptivity to all the data, including that provided by particular and partial approaches; that it is or should be the surest guide to determine the motivation of historical figures; that it should, therefore, deepen the work of the historian in his handling of the actual material.

From this point, the group decided it needed to develop a more precise definition of the problem. Since a body of

literature is already available, it was not felt necessary to produce another document at this time.

There was general agreement that Herbert Butterfield's *Christianity and History* represents the most penetrating treatment currently available. Consequently, the group determined that its procedure would be to work for a more precise definition of the problem of the Christian historian by undertaking a critique of the Butterfield book.

—John Dixon

Faculty Christian Fellowship

## CHRISTIAN UNITY AND WITNESS IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

Is the Church a chosen people?

What is the purpose of the university?

How do we witness together as Christian students?

These and similar questions were asked and studied by 1,750 students, faculty, and student workers who participated in one of the seven regional ecumenical conferences of the United Student Christian Council during the Christmas holidays 1956-1957. For four to five days members of the academic community met in an effort to come to terms with the central conference theme: *Our United Witness in the Colleges and Universities*.

The United Student Christian Council is a federation of several national denominational and YMCA-YWCA Student Movements and is, as such, the related student movement of the National Council of Churches.

The preparation of the conferences was in the hands of special planning committees, each composed of representatives of denominational and YMCA-YWCA student movements which are affiliated with the United Student Christian Council. Each of these planning committees chose the site for the USCC Conference in that area: Redlands University for the Pacific Southwest; Pacific Lutheran College for the Pacific Northwest; Oklahoma A. & M. for the Central Southwest; Northern Illinois State University for the Upper Midwest; Chatham College, Pittsburgh, for the Middle Atlantic; Davidson College for the Southeast; and Syracuse University for New York and New England.

Special emphasis was placed on study. Large blocks of time were reserved for individual and group study. Leaders were briefed as much as possible in ad-

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vance, and the Chatham College Conference called the leaders together in a special weekend preparatory conference. The conference study materials, published several months in advance, were designed to raise significant questions relating to the conference theme. The main study book, *Chosen Peoples*, by Denis Baly, an Anglican layman presently residing at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, focused for the student an understanding of God's call in the church, the community of learning, and the nation. Special ecumenical study groups were formed during the fall months on numerous campuses across the country.

At the Davidson College Conference students spent up to four hours in the library where selected books were at hand. Dr. Waldo Beach, Professor at Duke University, addressed the Conference for one hour each day. The rest of the time was spent in seminar-type discussion groups led by faculty persons.

As the conferences got under way, each of them took somewhat a different course. But the two basic issues remained the same with the emphasis placed more on the one or the other: the *nature of the Church* and the *nature of the university*.

### THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

In the study book, *Chosen Peoples*, the biblical idea of the Church as God's chosen people had been forcefully set forth. This was a hard nut to crack. To persons who had been brought up on a Christianity which primarily cherishes tolerance and universality, the idea of a

chosen people suggested exclusiveness and a partial God who chooses some, leaving out others. But as Mr. Baly, author of *Chosen Peoples* and Study Leader of the Pacific Northwest Conference, reminded the students "if we want to know what the Christian faith teaches about God we must first find out what the Bible has to say." This meant that the Bible had to be read and understood anew.

### THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSITY

The study of the university at the conference was a significant attempt to place the individual college experience of the participants into a larger context and to identify the major problems which confront the universities and higher education in America today. But the purpose of studying the university was not primarily to analyze the situation—though this is always a necessary prerequisite—but to discover where Christians in the university are called to take on their particular responsibility. Thus, out of the study of the university arose the question of the Christian witness.

### OUR UNITED WITNESS

Can we speak of the Christian witness in the academic community? Looking at their local campus groups, the students admitted that the unity as well as the witness leaves much to be desired. This realization could only lead to further questions, and, in fact, the major effort at this point went into finding out what the really significant questions are: What constitutes a real witness in the university? There was a feeling in some

conferences that the Churches need a new orientation at this point. Dr. John Dillenberger, Professor at Harvard Divinity School and principal speaker of the conference at Syracuse University, said that "the Church has a mission to the university, not to students individually as if it should try to 'hold its own' among students. . . . The task of the Christian in the university is not to convert people but to be committed to the task of the university."

Professor Dillenberger said further (as quoted from notes): "The church and the university have differing priorities: the church lives, affirms, and questions, in this order; the university questions, affirms, and lives, in this order."

Therefore the critical function is stronger than the affirmative function in the university. Therefore, the church must accept this as part of the necessity of examination and be patient. It should not seek to protect students from this but has a right to protest biased examination.

The conferences were constantly raising questions: What about unity? Is it desirable or would this not be uniformity? What is the nature of the unity we seek on campus? Students honestly asked themselves whether the denominational approach to the university makes any sense at all. All these were real questions and they remained open at the conferences, for they can only be answered back home where Christians are honestly engaged in the task of witnessing. But the conferences were significant in that they raised the ques-

tions which somehow must be answered if there is to be a vigorous Christian witness in the American colleges and universities.

Clearly, this was not the usual attempt to get along with one another by avoiding controversy but a confrontation of differences through which people discovered a unity given in Christ beyond any human agreement or differences.

This ecumenical encounter has to take place not only at an occasional regional or national conference, but on the local campuses. On the last day many campus delegations had already begun to formulate plans to hold intercollegiate or state ecumenical conferences or to bring new life to existing Protestant Councils on local campuses which presently are a source of discontent for many students. Furthermore, the Plan of Merger, presently negotiated between four denominational student movements, will in a very concrete way keep before the students the questions of unity and witness.

Whatever confusion may have clouded the issues, the conferences clearly showed that students are in motion, often more than their adult advisors seem to recognize, and the term "student movement" does not simply describe an organization. It will be the major responsibility of the United Student Christian Council to observe closely the direction of this motion and to give guidance and advice at every point where students seek to manifest Christian unity and witness.

—Thomas Wieser  
United Student Christian Council

## LAYMEN PLAN TO HELP CHURCH COLLEGES

At a recent meeting of the National Committee of Church Men for Church Colleges, a long range program was projected to assist the church-related and independent Christian colleges. The program included development of an information center where knowledge of church colleges may be available; a program of research and study on various questions and problems confronting these colleges; the calling of regional conferences or workshops for college trustees and administrators; and eventually, the development of an interdenominational placement bureau for the securing of faculty and staff. One of the major items is "develop a program of research, study, and discussion with the church-related and independent Christian colleges, leading to a clear and deeper understanding of the unique nature and contribution of these colleges."

Another major concern of this Committee is the development of a stronger observance of National Christian College Day, which this year falls April 28th. More and more denominations and local churches are planning observances for the Day, and this is the place perhaps where faculty members, student workers, and others might use their influence to encourage the college to try to stimulate interest in the Day in the community and region in which the college is located.

—Hubert C. Noble  
Commission on Christian  
Higher Education

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